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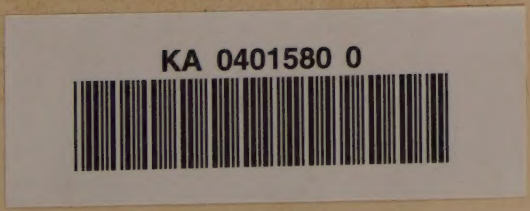

ESSAYS
OLD AND NEW

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ESSAYS

Old and New

By

ELIZABETH WORDSWORTH

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PREFATORY NOTE

A FEW of the essays in this little volume have already appeared elsewhere, and I specially have to acknowledge the kind permission of the Editor of the *Church Quarterly Review* to reprint the articles on 'Dante and Goethe', 'Jane Austen', and 'The English Church and the English Character'.

E. W.

OXFORD, *Oct.* 3, 1919.

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DANTE AND GOETHE

AMONG the various subjects selected by artists we are surprised that no one has ever made choice of the following scene, described by Eckermann in his *Conversations with Goethe*, which brings the two great poets, of whom we are about to speak, literally face to face. 'Goethe', says the narrator, 'was seated before a table on which burned two lights, which illuminated at once his own face and a colossal bust which stood before him on the table, and at which he was looking. "Now," said Goethe, pointing at the bust, "who is this?" "Apparently a poet, and an Italian," replied I. "It is Dante," said he. "It is well done; a fine head, and yet not very pleasing. He seems old, bowed down, and peevish; the features are lax and drawn down, as if he had just come from hell. I have a medal, struck during his life, and there everything appears much better."' Goethe is then described as dilating on the grandeur of the face; on the life and works of Dante, of whom he speaks with great reverence, but with so strong a sense of his 'obscurity', that he turns at last with a friendly air to Eckermann, and adds: 'To you the study of this poet is absolutely forbidden by your father-confessor.'

What a contrast is suggested between the cold white bust, with its austere expression, and the living

human countenance, with its brilliant eyes, and the majesty, vigour, and energy of which even old age could not rob the 'Jupiter-face' of the greatest poet of modern Germany!

We cannot think of Dante and Goethe without feeling they are representative men—representative not only of the Latin and Teutonic mind, but of two attitudes, widely differing, towards art, religion, and morals which concern ourselves most closely in the present day. We all feel the change which has come over the world since Dante's time—an inner change far more important than all that science has done for our outward life; we long to understand it, but its complexity overwhelms us; it meets us at every point, and yet we find it hard to analyse; its phenomena are so numerous that the process of sorting them seems almost interminable. Yet if we take the lives and work of Dante and Goethe and study them at various points we may find that such a study has done a good deal to throw light on the questions with which we are now confronted.

We may contrast Dante and Goethe, first, in their lives, and then successively under the following heads; others, no doubt, might readily be found, but we will content ourselves with these: reality; moral earnestness; nature; love. And first to speak of their lives.

Dante was of ancient and distinguished family (cf. his dialogue with Cacciaguida, *Par.* xv, xvi), born in a chivalrous and an adventurous age, when, in the midst of melancholy discords and divisions, of terrible crimes and disgraceful scandals, there was (as in our own land in the 'Elizabethan age' when Shakspere

wrote) a sense of youth and progress, of resources still to be developed, of power not yet fully put forth, of genius still in the bud (*Purg.* xi); an age in which scepticism, though not unknown, is apparently not widely spread, when moral responsibility, in theory at least, is fully recognized, and when, though the discipline of the Church is in a lamentable state of decay (*Purg.* xxxii), her doctrines are in the main received without serious question.

Dante grows up a man of strong affections and aversions. We see in his face 'the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love' of which a modern poet has told us. Pride and sensitiveness, keen critical power, fine sarcasm and contempt, are all in his nature; only balanced by intensity of inward gaze, depth of passion, fervour of devotion, concentration of thought, subtlety of disquisition, the philosopher's brain, the painter's eye,[1] and the poet's heart. He has many friends and fellow-students, and one ideal, supreme, one dares not call it unhappy, love. He takes a vehement part in politics, both by action and writing; his love for his country is only second to his love for his lady. In his great poem, 'Firenze' is apostrophized with almost as great pathos as Beatrice. But he is evidently a man of no popular gifts; he cannot accommodate himself to those he has to live with; he has no pleasure in society; there is scarce a vestige of humour in the whole of the *Divina Commedia*, and the characteristic repartees preserved of its author are haughty and ungracious.[2]

[1] Dante's friendship for Giotto is not likely to be soon forgotten by those who have ever visited Padua or Assisi.

[2] Perhaps the nearest approach to humour is in *Par.* xvi, where Beatrice is compared to the female attendant of Guinevere, with her warning cough.

The poet who could place Farinata among the flaming sepulchres (*Inf.* x), and Forese in one of the severest ordeals of Purgatory (*Purg.* xxiii), must have been in real life a most uncompromising judge. To say the least of it, his presence at the courts of Ravenna and Verona must often have been as silent a rebuke as that of Christian and Faithful among the booths of Vanity Fair.

The life of Goethe was, as is well known, the greatest contrast to all this. What books of the same class were ever more unlike than the *Vita Nuova* and *Aus meinem Leben*, not only in the incidents they narrate, but in the relative pitch of their writers' minds? The weak point in Goethe's character seems to have been that he missed the training of being brought face to face with the greatest realities; and that, with enormously wide experience, he lacked intensity. Compared with Dante, he makes us think of the lines:

> Weak eyes on darkness dare not gaze,
> It dazzles like the noon-day blaze;
> But he who sees God's Face may brook
> On the true face of sin to look.

Goethe's early life at Frankfort was that of the comfortable, half-patrician *bourgeois*, less devoid of objects that could act on the pictorial imagination, such as the old Römersaal, the Jews' quarter, and the neighbourhood of the Rhine, than of influences which could form the character. One misses the public school element, the parliamentary element, the adventurous element, which tell so much on the training of young men in our own country. And one pities the children whose early ideas of the sublime were

taken from Klopstock's *Messias*, and whose religion was the dreariest German Protestantism. The same fate pursues him at the University. The effect which Goethe's academic training left on his mind is most effectively summed up in that scene in *Faust*, where Mephistopheles arrayed in the doctor's gown ridicules one department of learning after another, including Goethe's own special study of jurisprudence (cf. *Götz v. B.*, act i. 4). Contrast with this the wonderful description in the *Paradiso* of the double circle of lights, representing human wisdom consecrated, beatified, and purified.

On the other hand, it must be said that the 'genialisch' period of Goethe's life presents him to us as one of the most popular men of his day—singularly handsome, not neglectful of his dress, ready to talk and make fun, delighting in stage representations, epigrams, *vers de société*, good at out-of-door amusements (compare his mother's delicious reproduction of the skating scene); a passionate, if a fickle, admirer of female beauty, as well as the centre of a noisy and lively group of male friends; a man with considerable power of enjoying the talent of others,[1] always in itself a note of superiority; with a devoted mother and sister, and, as time went on, an almost boundless circle of friends and admirers. In some respects, like his great contemporary and frequent reader, Napoleon, he seems to have had the power of making himself beloved without giving nearly so much as he received. When we contrast his autobiography with the *Confessions* of St. Augus-

[1] It is delightful to read his enthusiastic admiration for Scott, Byron, Manzoni, and others. At such moments one feels inclined to pardon him everything.

tine, we look in vain for passages of such depth and pathos as those on the death of Augustine's early friend, or on Nebridius, or those relating to Monica; though there is, we think, real affection in Goethe's account of his sister, and in some of the passages relating to Fräulein v. Klettenberg; and no one can read without delight of his generous conduct to Schiller, or can help being moved by the genuine sorrow which he, after his wont, rather smothered than displayed at the death of one whom many might have regarded as a rival. Certainly Goethe was neither petty, mean, nor jealous.

The Seven Years' War was going on during his youth (he himself indeed tells us of his early admiration for Frederick II), the War of Separation between England and America in his maturer life; but it is astonishing how little they seem to have affected him practically.

How different is the placid, pictorial treatment of war in *Hermann und Dorothea* from the burning words of Dante, written, we can almost fancy, by a hand indented with the very scars of battle! To mention only two—the passages concerning Manfred (*Purg.* iii), Buonconte (v), and, we may add, the terrible picture of Ugolino (*Inf.* xxxiii).

Goethe's position as Privy Councillor at Weimar was mere child's play when compared with Dante's part in politics. His own sense of this is perhaps unconsciously expressed in the lines

Deutschland? aber wo liegt es? Ich weiss das Land nicht zu finden;
Wo das Gelehrte beginnt, hört das Politische auf.[1]

[1] Cp. Eckermann under date March 14, 1830, p. 455 (Eng. ed.).

And we may compare the well-known anecdote of the excitement he was in about the rupture between Cuvier and Geoffroy St. Hilaire, on purely scientific matters, at a time when the rest of the world could think and speak of nothing but the Revolution of July 1830.

Nor can we pass over his steady, lifelong friendship for Karl August, on the one hand, nor on the other, his forbearing and persevering kindness to some who were in all respects immeasurably beneath him. But he was, all his days, a man whom others wanted rather than one who wanted others, and from this serene self-centredness rose in part his wonderful power of toleration.

Let us try to reconstruct for ourselves the age in which Goethe grew up—the age of powdered hair and silk stockings, of dullness, stiffness, long windedness, of formality and unreality. On one side Voltaire and Rousseau, already beginning to lose their power over some of the rising generation; on the other such influences as those of Klopstock and Lavater, Fräulein v. Klettenberg, on her sick-bed, with her face full of hope and devotion, gazing at the crucifix; and Stilling, burning charcoal or cutting out garments,[1] with a heart made happy by the most absolute faith in a personal Providence. On one side scepticism, on the other pietism. Heroes there were none; unless Frederick II, the idol of Goethe's boyhood, could have been called so. There were no picturesque tales of Jacobite adventure, no hoards of rich material, humorous, pathetic, or stirring, such as

[1] *Aus m. Leben*, i. 447.

lay ready to be kindled at the touch of Scott.[1] There was little to correspond with the exquisite home-life of England, which was to be ere long reflected in her poetry and fiction. There was none of the brilliancy which had made even vice attractive at Versailles. There was, as Goethe himself complained,[2] no grand Church ritual, no antique liturgies, no great princely prelates, no links with apostolic Christianity, little of the grace and dignity of religion. Yet, when every allowance has been made for external circumstances, we cannot but feel that Goethe's own nature was as much at fault as any of his surroundings. 'How far can we help our nature?' is a question hard enough for each one to solve in his own case, and impossible in that of others.

> Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
> Decidedly can try us,

said poor Burns, whose own position was certainly none of the easiest; but it seems impossible to believe that there is not some time when man is master of his fate; in other words, responsible for that 'character' which is destiny.

That Goethe, great as he undoubtedly was, somehow missed the highest possibilities that lay before him at the outset of his life, we think can hardly be denied. A minute observer of details, he could put together admirably, but could rarely, if ever, give the breath of life to his creations. How uninteresting a play is *Egmont*, compared with Shakspere's poorest effort! With a real genius for lyrical poetry, Goethe touches

[1] For Goethe's own sense of this, see Eckermann (Bohn's Eng. edition), pp. 100, 171, 528.

[2] *Aus m. Leben* (Stuttgart ed. 1866), vol. i, pp. 347–9.

everything *but* the heart.[1] Gifted with a strong sense of the absurd, he does not know what true, hearty humour is.[2] Judging by the so-called comic papers of Germany, we may doubt if the majority of his countrymen do, even now.

Let us now take the contrasts between the two poets somewhat more in detail. And first, as regards *Reality*. We have already noticed some of the causes which prevented Goethe from being real, and which may help to account for the falsetto strains which run through his writings (as through Byron's) whenever his own self is not the principal figure. Dante, on the other hand, always loses himself in his subject. What but this is the power which gives such a sense of truth, vividness, and distinctness in situations the most unlike ordinary life, throughout Dante's wonderful lay, as perhaps has never been equalled among 'uninspired' writers, except by John Bunyan? Dante is, of course, thoroughly *synthetic*. He does not take existing phenomena to pieces in order to understand the laws which give rise to them; but he sees in them parts of some magnificent whole to which they, and all things else, are tending. Classical ideas are regenerated by him as if in the baptistery of his *bel San Giovanni*. Saul and Niobe, Arachne and Rehoboam, Nimrod and Briareus, are all revivified by him (*Purg.* xii), while his deep reverence for the great pre-Christian (we cannot call them pagan) singers is shown in that most exquisite

[1] Perhaps we ought to make an exception in favour of Gretchen, in *Faust*. Yet the situation is one so pathetic from the nature of things that it would have been difficult *not* to make it touching. As Dr. Johnson said of Clarissa Harlowe, 'Give me a sick-bed and a dying lady, and I'll be pathetic myself.'

[2] See, e. g., in Lewes's *Life*, the account of Goethe's 'adaptation' of the character of Mercutio for the German stage.

fourth canto of the *Inferno* describing the limbo of the unbaptized; and the 'prato di fresca verdura':

> Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,
> Di grand' autorità ne' lor sembianti;
> Parlavan rado, e con voci soavi,

and in the episode of Virgil's meeting with Statius, which is one of the most affecting scenes in the *Purgatorio*.

We may note that wonderful apostrophe,

> O sommo *Giove*
> Che fosti 'n terra per noi crocifisso (*Purg.* vi),

—a remarkable expression of Dante's whole attitude as regards all that is noble in classical belief and language.

Again, his references to Plato and Aristotle, direct and indirect, are tolerably numerous, though he gently reproves their desire for too much knowledge:

> 'State contenti, umana gente, al *quia*,
> Chè, se potuto aveste veder tutto,
> Mestier non era partorir Maria;
> E disiar vedeste senza frutto
> Tai, che sarebbe lor disio quetato,
> Ch' eternalmente è dato lor per lutto.
> I' dico d'Aristotele e di Plato,
> E di molt' altri.' E qui chinò la fronte;
> E più non disse, e rimase turbato. (*Purg.* iii.)

So with his beloved science of astronomy. He takes it at the point to which the researches of his own day had brought it, and idealizes it by his genius in a manner compared with which the old legends of the starry world seem bald and childish. He peoples the planets with beatified spirits. 'Wherever I am,' he is reported to have said when in exile, 'I can still see the sun and the stars.' *How* he saw them, *what*

he saw in them, none but himself can fully express, as he leads us on from light to light, from sphere to sphere, in canto after canto of the *Paradiso*, adding image after image, heaping bliss upon bliss, till at last he leaves us alone with the music and light of his grand climax :

L'amor, che muove 'l Sole e l'altre stelle.

Still more wonderful perhaps is his power of idealizing the everyday sights and sounds of earth, the common incidents of human life. He is constantly taking you by surprise as he flashes upon you in his grandest or most terrible or most affecting moments, some image derived from ordinary life. Not Ezekiel himself (whom in many ways he resembles) could have glorified the commonplace more than Dante does. Who can forget his grim picture of the arsenal at Venice, his exquisite description of the dew in the opening of the *Purgatorio*, his lines comparing the souls who were being purged of their pride to the sculptured figures bearing up the weight of a roof ?[1] But to enter upon this subject would be to embark on a boundless sea of quotations ! We hardly know which to admire most in Dante, his keen vision and definite grasp of outward objects, or the wonderful imaginative power which, as it were, re-created and revivified them to express great spiritual ideas.

In the case of Goethe all this is reversed. Notwithstanding his own protestations, his mind, especially in early life, is thoroughly self-conscious, analytical, and irreverent. He has, like his own Mephistopheles, a faculty of disintegrating, spoiling, and pulling to

[1] *Purg.* x, end.

pieces. Almost the first anecdote of his childhood is how he amused himself by smashing the crockery which he flung into the street, and one fears it was somewhat characteristic. As a boy, he reads the Bible in order to tease his tutor with hard questions.[1] He studies the Book of Job, and from one of its grandest passages produces what, if one of the wittiest, is also surely one of the most blasphemous of modern effusions, his prologue to *Faust*. He reads *Hamlet*, and embodies some acute criticism in a work which would be found uncongenial if not unreadable by those whose literary taste had been formed on nobler models. He reads the *Vicar of Wakefield*—certainly the finest work of its class then existing, exhibiting as it does the delicacy, the chivalry, the tenderness, the originality, and the playfulness of Goldsmith's mind—and the result is a wretched parody of the story in real life, which has left one of the worst blots on Goethe's memory, and which shadowed the whole after-existence of one of the most unselfish of women.

Lessing, Winckelmann, Heyne and others have awakened a taste for classic art in Germany. Goethe studies it, but gods and heroes are never *real* to him as to Dante. He does not make them live again, though he knows all about the limbs and muscles of the Laocoön, and writes classical tragedies, which even his influence and personal presence cannot make popular.[2] 'Here in Weimar', he says, 'they have done me the honour to perform my *Iphigenia* and my

[1] *A. m. L.* i. 146.

[2] See some interesting remarks on this subject in Lowell's *My Study Windows* in his Essay on Swinburne.

Tasso, but how often? Scarcely once in three or four years. *The public finds them tedious.*'

He seems to have been unable to distinguish simplicity from vulgarity, solemnity from dullness, accidents from essentials, the impressive from the absurd. We must, though, do him the justice to remember that he himself acknowledged the exaggerations and extravagances in *Werther*, which laid themselves open to parodies some of which, notably Thackeray's, will be remembered when Werther himself, blue frock, yellow waistcoat, floods of tears, pistols, and 'Butterbrod', are all forgotten.

Hermann und Dorothea is perhaps Goethe's *chef-d'œuvre* as regards artistic finish—an exquisite piece of painting, if not a heart-stirring narrative. Somehow one feels as if the poet were perpetually asking himself 'How would Homer have put this?' instead of throwing himself into his characters. When we compare it, as we can hardly help doing, with such a poem as the *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* we cannot help thinking that Clough cared far more sincerely about his subject. *Hermann und Dorothea* may be a triumph of execution, but our real sympathies are awakened by the Oxford man and the Highland lassie. Perhaps what Goethe succeeded in best were short lyrics and ballads. His exquisite ear, his quick susceptibility, his wonderful power of condensation, and his skill in choosing materials all came to his aid. It was Coleridge, we think, who said that he would have given anything to have written the lines:

> Und Marmorbilder steh'n und seh'n mich an;
> Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, gethan?

So again 'Der Sänger', and 'Wer nie sein Brod mit

Thränen ass', also in *Wilhelm Meister*; the little gem 'Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh', the touching introductory stanzas to and many fine passages in *Faust*, and the ballad of the King of Thule, are confessedly among the most musical of the German language. They are on every one's lips and in every one's memory, thanks to Beethoven, Schubert, and Mendelssohn ('*his* Casella's'),—and yet Goethe, writing in German, seems like Demosthenes practising with pebbles in his mouth. What would he not have done with a more plastic language? Many of Goethe's epigrams, too, are exceedingly happy—little worlds of practical of speculative wisdom.

> Betrübt euch nicht, ihr guten Seelen,
> Denn wer nicht fehlt weiss wohl wenn andre fehlen:
> Allein wer fehlt, der ist erst recht daran,
> Er weiss nun deutlich wie sie wohl gethan.
>
> (Good people, let not grief your hearts assail,
> True, he who fails not, knows when others fail;
> But he who fails, however sad his plight,
> At least sees plain when others live aright.)

This represents the good side of Toleration, of which Goethe was the apostle, as Dante was of Conscience. And this brings us to another, and most significant, difference between the two; and that is their different conceptions as regards *morality*, or a sense of absolute right and wrong, and our consequent duty.

Dante's sense of this lies at the root of his whole nature, and may be said to be the axis on which his great poem revolves.

Nothing can turn him aside from the conviction that man has free will and personal responsibility, and that he is rewarded or punished according to his

exercise of that will. It is a change of *will* alone that releases sinners from purgatory (xxi); and it is not what a man appears to be, but what he is at heart that God regards (*Par.* iv).

The exceeding horror of sin, its inevitable punishment, and the absolute need of repentance, are ideas ever present to Dante's mind, and he never shrinks from looking the most terrible truths full in the face. Goethe, on the other hand, like a true disciple of Spinoza, never fully realized, and never adequately taught, the responsibility of the human will.[1] His autobiography (whether avowedly his own, or veiled under the name of some fictitious hero) is that of a man surrendering himself to one attraction after another, or borne along by some external fate, as in Egmont's celebrated speech (act ii, sc. 2) about the car of man's destiny.

The austere virtues of self-control, self-denial, the idea of living according to some fixed moral laws, were not strongly present in his mind.

How, to illustrate what has been said by an example, would Dante have treated a character like Gretchen in *Faust*?

She is supposed to be saved, but why? She has been abundantly miserable, but has made no effort to forsake the sin which brought her into trouble, nor to forswear the company of her betrayer.

> Doch—alles was dazu mich trieb,
> Gott! war so gut, ach! war so lieb.[2]

She prays before the Mater Dolorosa a sentimental prayer, without a word of amendment of life. She

[1] See Lewes's *Life*; especially the chapter on Goethe's marriage.
[2] Cp. Browning (*Confessions*).

faints away during the Dies Irae in the cathedral, but the thought of judgement, and wrath to come, does not appear to bring forth any fruit in action; and the horrible closing scene leaves us in doubt whether she has made a single good resolution, whether there is any real μετάνοια or change of character which would have made her act differently another time.[1] Compare this, on the one hand, with the picture, terrible in its sincerity, of Paolo and Francesca in the *Inferno*, and the high standard of virtue in the exquisite canto about Piccarda in the *Paradiso*; and we see what a misfortune it is for the world that some writers should take Goethe's vague sentimentality and moral feebleness for their guide, instead of Dante's thorough, distinct, masculine, honest, and therefore most pure and most delicate treatment of great ethical questions. 'There is a time when true love must be stern' is a doctrine too little attended to at present.

A word or two may be said here about the misuse of such terms as 'nature' and 'natural', both in Goethe's day and in our own—the reaction against theological dogma, old customs, and religious discipline, which makes itself felt not only in our literature, but in our drawing-rooms; not only in our churches, but in our police-courts; not only in our schools and universities, but in our national life.

Dante is natural always, without knowing it or thinking about it. Goethe wants to be, and misses it. As he says in his *Musen und Grazien in der Mark*:

[1] We cannot but contrast with this Walter Scott's masterly treatment of the same subject in the *Heart of Midlothian*.

O wie freut es mich, mein Liebchen,
Dass du so *natürlich* bist!

and again:

Wir sind bieder und *natürlich*,
Und das ist genug gethan!

And compare numerous passages in *Werther*, as well as, of course, in *Faust*.

Fancy Dante complimenting any of his friends on being natural! One might as well congratulate a native of Middlesex for being English. What else should he be? Dante never loses his firm hold on the essential idea of anything that presents itself to him. He never startles, though he often overwhelms the mind. One may say of him that in this he resembles St. John in the Apocalypse. He is never sensational, he has no stage tricks. Like Nature herself, he is 'ever averse to pantomime'. He is always in earnest, always single-eyed, a master of true sublimity. One of the principal factors in his character is his power of looking up to something outside himself. Scornful as he seemed, he was enthusiastic and devout to a degree which is rare indeed in modern times. His very bitterness came from an unfulfilled ideal. The great churchmen, against whom he inveighs so fiercely, were faithless to a high trust. No one would have reverenced them more than Dante had they been worthy of it. If he is more than ordinarily impatient of female follies, it is because his ideal of woman is unapproachably high. If he has no pity on the vicious, it is because he knows the real worth of virtue. If he uses a friar's cord in the *Inferno* as a bait for Geryon, he

pays the most splendid of tributes to Francis and Dominic in the *Paradiso*.

Goethe had little reverence, and therefore was incapable of righteous indignation. Consequently he is incapable of true sublimity. Perhaps he most nearly approaches it in the Hymn of the three archangels in *Faust*. But even his descriptions of nature are full of vague generalities. Dante is, as we have said, *real* in his most transcendental moments. Goethe, on the other hand, sometimes introduces an element of nightmare into ordinary life. As Madame de Staël expressed it: 'C'est le cauchemar de l'esprit que cette pièce de *Faust*, mais un cauchemar qui double sa force.' We hardly need recall how pantomimic, how theatrical Goethe is in this his most famous work, with his big dog swelling up as high as the ceiling, his magic books and phials, to say nothing of the phantasmagoria of his witches' sabbath. All this, strangely fascinating as it is, may make us laugh or shudder according to our temperament, but it gives us no sense of awe. How could it, when the poet had it not himself?

Contrast for a moment the singsong Easter hymns introduced into *Faust* with the grand diction of Dante, always rising with its theme. Contrast the juggling nonsense about the badly-drawn pentacle on Faust's doorstep, and the rats and mice who are summoned to nibble at it, with the grave, more than Miltonic earnestness which leads us on from depth to depth of the *Inferno*. Even the scene with Malacoda and Draghignazzo is perfectly serious. Dante has seen the boiling pitch in the Arsenal at Venice, and amidst the crowd of sailors and shipwrights, amidst the noise

and movement, the seething and rocking, the thud of the hammers and the uproar of the voices, he, and he alone, has beheld the terrible antitype of this earthly scene. He tells us about it without the shadow of a smile.

Or he sees a silkworm in its golden cocoon,[1] and he thinks of a beatified spirit, Charles Martel of Hungary, invisible through the very glory which surrounds it :

> La mia letizia mi ti tien celato,
> Che mi raggia dintorno e mi nasconde,
> Quasi animal di sua seta fasciato.[2]

Again : Dante's conception of the Devil is that of a traitor; with Goethe he is, above all things, a scoffer. Such an idea could only have been suitably developed in a late and highly artificial age, when there was much pretension and little reality, when form had taken the place of feeling, and belief in God and in goodness had been greatly weakened ; and could only have been worked out in so masterly a manner by a writer who had seen something like it in real life. Mephistopheles is evidently treated *con amore*, and we must not forget that Goethe was in the habit of applying this nickname to Merck, one of his early acquaintances.

So again, Goethe is of course speaking behind the mask of Faust in such lines as these:

> Statt der lebendigen Natur,
> Da Gott die Menschen schuf hinein,
> Umgibt in Rauch und Moder nur
> Dich Thiergeripp' und Todtenbein.[3]

[1] For other instances of Dante's wonderful grasp of the outer world and its inner meaning, see Dean Church's inimitable essay; and a well-known passage in Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, vol. iii, ch. xiv.

[2] *Par.* viii. [3] Cp. *Aus m. Leben*, book x, vol. i, p. 500.

Nature! How passionately she was invoked at the close of the eighteenth century in England, France, and Germany! Under how many false images was she ignorantly worshipped, and how strangely diverse were the replies given to the cry which burst forth simultaneously for her in many tongues! How many professed seekers after nature contented themselves, like Faust, with welcoming the tempter, and his offers of unbounded freedom from the restraints of honour, tradition, law, and conscience; of entire self-pleasing, and of ridicule for all that had hitherto been held noble or sacred! And observe, Faust has nothing to set against the offers of Mephistopheles. He says himself:

> Aus dieser Erde quillen meine Freuden,
> Und diese Sonne scheinet meinen Leiden,
> Kann ich mich erst von ihnen scheiden,
> Dann mag was will und kann gescheh'n.

Alas, that such words should be only too true an expression of the feeling of many highly-cultivated minds among ourselves—a refined and beautiful form of 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die'.

So far as we know, Goethe had no antidote to offer to the evil which he paints so vividly and sympathetically. He has given us, in one of the most unconsciously pathetic passages of his life, a reminiscence of the period of his first Communion, when his mind was unusually susceptible to religious impressions;[1] and he came to confession ready to place his doubts and difficulties in such a light as would have made it easy for an intelligent listener to have helped and advised him.

'As soon as I got into the old choir of the convent

[1] *A. m. L.*, book vii.

church, and approached the wonderful latticed cupboards in which the clergy were usually to be found on these occasions, when the sacristan opened the door, and I found myself in such close quarters with my spiritual grandpapa, and heard his weak nasal tones bidding me welcome, all the light went out from my heart and mind, the carefully prepared form of confession vanished from my lips; I opened in the hurry of the moment the book which was in my hands, and read off from it the "first-best" short formula that presented itself, and which was so general in its expressions that any one might have used it with an easy conscience. I received absolution, and took my departure, feeling neither warm nor cold, went two days afterwards to the Lord's Table with my parents, and for a short time behaved as was proper after such a holy ceremony.'

The whole context is most instructive as showing what the Protestantism and Biblical criticism of Germany could *not* do for one of the most gifted, eager, and inquiring of her sons. 'We were taught that we were much better than Catholics, for the very reason that at confession we were not expected to mention anything very special; indeed it was not *comme il faut* to do so even if we desired it.' Can we be surprised at the pictures Goethe gives us of German society at a time when the Ten Commandments were hardly to be mentioned to ears polite, while offences against them were the familiar experience of almost every household?

In Dante's time there was no attempt to throw the veil of an uneasy, self-misgiving respectability over flagrant crimes. Strong things were called by strong

names. Sin was only to be washed away by repentance. The merits of saints seem scarcely to have had any place in the *Divina Commedia*, though the prayers of the faithful are earnestly entreated for. Salvation is to be purchased by the blood of Christ, to be worked out by each man with fear and trembling. He makes no attempt to stifle Nature, on the one hand; still less, on the other hand, to deny her weakness, her corruption, her need of divine aid and human vigilance. Happily for us in England the divorce between religion and ordinary life has never entirely taken place. In the very deadest time of English literature we had had our Bishop Butler to tell us how 'Nature' should be interpreted, and in the very deadest time of our religious life we had not only the great Wesleyan movement, but the Church itself possessed, as was subsequently shown, a marvellous recuperative power.

'Kein Geistlicher hat ihn begleitet' is the significant termination of *Werther*. 'The hero of this piece unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth; he is a priest, a husbandman, and the father of a family,' is the equally significant introduction to the *Vicar of Wakefield*, 'one whose chief stores of comfort are drawn from futurity.'

On one other topic we must touch, though our space forbids us to do it at any length, and that is the very striking difference in the estimation of woman and in the emotion of love in Dante and Goethe. Goethe's love-poems, so far as our acquaintance with them extends, do not touch us very deeply, though they are not without a certain appealing charm and reality, so far as they go.

What his life was is, alas, only too well known. The woman who for a time engrosses his affections is 'ein schönes Kind', to become probably, in the sequel, 'ein armes Kind'. Love is with him of the earth, earthy—something to be played with, to be enjoyed, a refuge from ennui, a passion, degraded and degrading, not an ennobling unselfish affection. With Dante, the earthly passion is transfigured, idealized, divinized. The little girl whom he sees in budding youth, the maiden who is snatched from him and from the world in the flower of her loveliness, revives for him as the personification of all that is beautiful, wise, pure, and good in human nature, till he beholds her at last enthroned above, and gazing on the beatific vision :

> Così orai, ed ella, sì lontana
> Come parea, sorrise e riguardommi,
> Poi si tornò all' eterna fontana. *Parad.* xxxi.

In a word, as *Faust*, the crowning work of Goethe's genius, represents to us human love in a low and corrupt form conspiring with unsanctified human knowledge for the ruin of female innocence and the destruction of man, so the *Divina Commedia* may be said to have for its principal theme love consecrated and divinized, leading man through his devotion to womanhood in its highest and purest aspect to the fruition of heavenly wisdom and blessedness in the presence of God

One word as to the conclusions deducible from what has been said. We see in Dante and Goethe strongly brought out the difference between a first-rate and a second-rate poet. The former (though

gifted with an instinct of beauty higher than all art) cares more for what he has to say than for what people will think of him, and of how he says it. The second-rate poet does not look on the world so much as a place of great living realities, but as one which furnishes materials for art. It does not much matter whether it is his own passions and feelings, the Bible, the classics, the events of history and contemporary life, so long as they afford him good 'motives'. Like Titian, he can paint equally well a Madonna or a Venus. After his first period of 'Sturm und Drang', his pulses are cool, his mind is collected, his eye and hand are steady, and as he does not wear himself out with unnecessary emotion, there is no reason why he should not live on comfortably to a good old age. But what is the world, after all, the better for him? What has he taught? What noble spirits has he stirred up? What impulses has he awakened for good? What hindrances has he placed in the way of evil? What will posterity be able to thank him for?

Perhaps we might say in Goethe's case we owe him something for his wonderful example of conscientious and many-sided industry, in the unsparing cultivation of the faculties, and the careful study of men, books, and physical nature,[1] the 'ceaseless activity' in fact, which he himself makes Faust's passport to heaven—a singular preparation one would think for the beatific vision of God and the contemplation of His

[1] Besides his genius for biology and morphology, Goethe had extraordinary insight and foresight in the concerns of real life. See, e. g., his almost prophetic language as reported by Eckermann about United Germany and the Suez Canal (223–350). In another place his imagination anticipates photography (*A. m. L.* i. 237).

Divine excellences. On the other hand, the man who could put down the *Divina Commedia* without breathing some aspirations towards a nobler life must indeed be in a pitiable condition. And if we are to have great poets in our own time, or, better still, the stuff out of which great poets are made, we must forget ourselves and be in earnest, we must not only cherish virtue, but hate sin with our whole hearts, we must recognize the responsibility of the human will, and the worth of every human soul; we must love deeply and sympathize fully; and we must look on Nature with gratitude, affection, and wonder, as we not only recognize in it, as indeed Goethe did, the handiwork of a personal Creator, but see in it, like Dante, the symbolical expression of the wisdom of the Divine mind.

Postscript

The preceding pages, written just forty years ago, are now reproduced in a slightly abridged form. In re-reading them I cannot help feeling some surprise to see the realization of some of the ideas there expressed, with an added emphasis given to them by the present war. It does indeed seem remarkable that the figure of Faust, the most noteworthy one in the imaginative literature of Germany, should symbolize as it seems to do at present that of the German nation, or at least the present leaders of Germany, in its being willing to 'gain the whole world' even if by so doing it 'loses its own soul'. At this moment the very ideas of conscience, honour, justice, and still more of mercy, seem to have been

discarded. It is hardly necessary to dilate on what is so obvious, but the tragedy of it is that the tempting baits offered by the invisible Mephistopheles, of national aggrandizement and of world-wide power, all appear already to be proving themselves illusory and even dangerous to him who tries to seize them.

Who again can help feeling that the indifference to, and the sacrifice of, all that is best in womanhood which we see in *Faust* is but a feeble and inadequate symbol of the unspeakable brutality towards women and children which have been perpetrated by the countrymen of Goethe? Goethe himself, if not one of the most unselfish, was one of the humanest of men, and it is difficult to say whether he would have been most revolted by the hideous cruelties of the present war, or grieved at the wanton destruction of the beautiful architectural monuments or the treasures of art and literature, to say nothing of the desecration of rural homes and natural products which it has brought in its train. And yet, can we acquit him of all responsibility? Could he be said to have raised the standard of duty, of morals, and still more, of the spiritual life, of his countrymen? He certainly was an apostle of culture, of education both literary and scientific. Is it not perhaps partly due to his influence that Germany has hoped to win salvation, as Faust did, by 'ceaseless activity'? If thoroughness, organization, scientific accuracy, and practical efficiency are sufficient to make a nation great, then Germany ought certainly to be the greatest nation in the world. Why is it that her failure in this respect seems to grow more and more conspicuous day by day? Is it not because she has dared—

Animam praeferre pudori
et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas?

Has she not preferred material well-being to loftiness of character, instead of remembering that 'the life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment'? Has she not been content to sell her birthright for a mess of pottage?

What is the boasted *Kultur* of Germany? The crushing of all originality, all initiative, all individuality. And how can a nation thus trained out of all that goes to produce strong and resourceful personalities hope to bring forth rulers of men? Or how can such a training bring an element of beauty or lovableness into the home? What room is there in it for sympathy or for that humour which often is sympathy in a thin disguise? And how far, we may ask once more, was Goethe's life and work a reflection of the national spirit, or how far has it tended to mould and to produce the character of the race?

Aug. 18, 1918.

AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON

MANY of us must have felt, when standing on some historic site, a great desire to summon up the past, and to see the place with the eyes of some hero of bygone days. Those who visit Rome must have experienced this when they stood in the Forum near the spot where the orations were made over Caesar's body, and tried to live the scene over again.

But they will have found that subsequent ages have been too strong for them. Many of the so-called 'antiquities' of the Forum, though not of course those quite recently discovered, are, for the most part, modern, in comparison with the pre-Augustan age. One wanders, Murray or Baedeker in hand, from place to place, and comes reluctantly to the conclusion that almost the only things one can see exactly as the ancient Romans of the Republic saw them, with the exception of the Cloaca Maxima, the Tullianum Prison, fragments of the Servian wall, and some few others which are best left to antiquarians to enumerate, are the outlines of the distant hills (Soracte perhaps still white with snow), and the lovely shrubs, trees, and wild-flowers. Surely Catullus and Virgil must have delighted in the narcissus, the cyclamen, the anemones, the bushes of myrtle and laurustinus, just as we do now. In the House of Livia we may still see the remains of a painting representing a floral wreath, which shows that the Romans were not insensible to these natural beauties. Unquestionably too, the old types of countenance still exist. One may see the antitype of a fine portrait-bust in the crowd on some festival day in St. Peter's; or the replica of a graceful statue in the figure of some peasant woman. It is Nature and not Art that confers and possesses immortality.

The thought may perhaps have occurred to some of us, how much more Roman (after all) we are in a certain sense, at least, than the Romans, if we realize that Caesar had never read a single line of Horace or Virgil, that so far as we know he never even observed, say to Labienus or Quintus Cicero, 'Dulce et decorum

est pro patria mori'—that of all the 'tags' which have for the last two centuries abounded in the British press, on British platforms, and in the British House of Commons there was hardly one which would not have come to him with the delicious shock of absolute novelty. [It may be doubted moreover (we may remark in passing) whether either Horace or Virgil, or any other ancient Roman, would have recognized their own words in our pronunciation, but this is another matter.] In the same way, it is difficult for us to realize that the great days of Athens were practically over before the Parthenon was built, and that in a certain sense Athens is much more Athens to us than it was to any one who flourished before the days of Pericles, and for whom not only the Parthenon, but a large portion of the magnificent Attic literature were things unknown. But what need to speak of Rome or Athens? We have only to look at home. Think of Shakspere's England and *our* England. We look on Shakspere as the typical Englishman. But what did his England represent? A place where there were practically no potatoes, no tea, no tobacco, no stamps, no half-crowns, no newspapers, and of course no trains, no motor-cars, no bicycles, no matchboxes, no electric light. But that is saying little; let us rather say a place where even the idea of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was only just beginning to realize itself, where the enrichment of our race by the elements of character, to which Scotland and Ireland in their different way have done so much to contribute, was still in the future, where there was only the dawn of colonial life in America, where our great Indian Empire was still undreamt of,

and where the very word 'Imperialism' did not exist in the language. It is strange to feel Shakspere so near and yet so far of. We read with interest those portions of the *Tempest* which have for us a meaning and a reference far beyond anything their author could have dreamt of—the allusions to the still-vexed Bermoothes, Gonzalo's quaint ideas of how he would govern his colony or 'plantation', the figure of Caliban, the typical savage—by what insight did Shakspere represent him the moment he comes into contact with the 'white man' being made worse than a savage by intoxicating drink?—alas, that the poet should have been so true a prophet! But it is very difficult for us to put ourselves really back into Shakspere's time, to imagine life as it was then—difficult to think how much that forms part of our very daily bread, as it were, should never have been dreamt of in his philosophy. To think he was never told that

> Many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air;

or that

> To err is human, to forgive, divine.

Books, historical events, religions and political movements, great personalities—things which seem part of the essentials of English life and character—were all unknown to him. Nay, is it not a little sad that he never saw Garrick or Mrs. Siddons, or Kemble or Kean, or Mrs. Jordan—to say nothing of our own contemporaries—in any of the magnificent parts in his plays which they so sympathetically interpreted? Even his own influence and its effects never reached

him. Poor man, he lived in a pre-Shaksperian world, and missed some amusement at all events by not being able to read the criticisms which England, France, and Germany have bestowed on his productions. But the great makers of human society seldom live in the society they have helped to mould—*they* labour, and other men enter into their labours. Goethe, Tennyson, and Ruskin, who lived to be octogenarians, may to a certain extent have done so, but Shakspere, who died at fifty-two, was like a sun early darkened by envious fogs and vapours, and never allowed to see the western sky all around him illumined with the glory which he had created. A few allusions, hunted up with difficulty from contemporary writers, some noble lines by Ben Jonson and by Milton—a grave in Stratford Church with an inscription not more flattering than many long-forgotten authors have received[1]—these sum up, so far as we know, the amount of notice taken of his death by contemporaries. There was no public funeral in Westminster Abbey,[2] there were no portraits in the illustrated papers, nobody seems to have ever wanted his autograph, or a lock of his hair, or to have 'interviewed' him. When he died the clergy of Stratford and the neighbouring parishes did not all send round circulars to get up memorial windows and drinking-fountains in their respective villages.

[1] Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem
Terra tegit, populus moeret, Olympus habet.

It has been suggested that Socratem should be Sophoclem; but we fancy Shakspere would have laughed and shrugged his shoulders had he read his own epitaph and found himself compared to Nestor (Pylius).

[2] His monument there is, of course, considerably later (1740).

Happy, happy Elizabethan or Jacobean England! Yes, Shakspere's world was indeed a world very unlike our own—yet, as was said above in the case of Rome, and as might have been said with equal truth in the case of Athens, it is here Nature and not Art that possesses immortality.

He who goes wandering in the fields and villages of Warwickshire—indeed we might say of the Midland counties generally—can get very close to Shakspere still. You may approach Stratford-on-Avon by train, by bicycle, or motor-car, and by means of far better roads than he ever was fortunate enough to walk or ride upon—and you may feel times are very much changed since his day. But if you turn off the beaten track you may still be lucky enough to see the strawberry growing underneath the nettle; you will in their due season see and smell Shakspere's violets, daffodils, cowslips, primroses, wallflowers (or as he would have said 'gilliflowers'), and though we hope that you will not be made uncomfortably aware of the fact that 'it is the bright day which brings forth the adder', yet you will look on toads and frogs and fish and rats and all the homely animate and inanimate things seen on a country walk, birds, bees, summer-flies, even gnats and beetles, with a certain reverent affection when you think of the idle country-lad who was leisurely but unceasingly fusing these simple everyday images into what would one day be magnificent poetry, and reading the inner meaning of Nature with an unconscious but unerring eye.

Yet if we are brought near to Shakspere by the 'flora and fauna' of his native land, how much more

so by our contemporary men and women? It would be going through too long a list were we to try to reckon them up—but Shakspere's people are *ourselves*. Dress them in different clothes, place them in different surroundings, and there is no reason why we should not to-morrow meet Hamlet on an Oxford reading-party, find Cordelia walking by a bath-chair on the King's Road at Brighton, or Goneril and Regan in a fashionable hotel, as two smart women who have married for money, and are as hard as their own diamonds. We may encounter Portia on a G. F. S. platform, or a Board of Guardians, find Shylock somewhere on the Stock Exchange, Antonio as Chairman to a Relief Committee; Cleopatra as a fascinating 'Society' woman, or possibly an actress; Mark Antony in a fast set about town, Rosalind captain of a girl's hockey team, dear little Juliet still in the schoolroom, but secretly treasuring Romeo's letters from South Africa, Polonius in a Government office, Prince Hal and Falstaff at the Derby, Bassanio as a popular preacher—but where is the list to end?

Nothing, however, makes us feel Shakspere's greatness more than the humiliating thought of how very, very few of the figures in our contemporary drama and fiction will be alive in another 300 years. When the Great Englander or the American of the twenty-third century looks back on the England of to-day, to what work will he be able to point that has succeeded in keeping its fictitious men and women before the eyes of posterity, as Shakspere has done his, or as Homer and Sophocles have done theirs? Different answers to this question will be given by

different persons, but we think it may be safely owned that nine-tenths of the heroes and heroines of our own time will be rather like Thackeray's clever sketch of Louis XIV without his wig, his coat, his ruffles, his cane, and his high-heeled shoes, very bare and shrivelled and insignificant figures indeed. Let us hope at all events that the *real* men and women of our day will have left more lasting memories behind them. We would fearlessly place Queen Victoria against Queen Elizabeth, Darwin against Bacon, Cecil Rhodes against Raleigh, and other great persons whom it would be invidious to name against some of the other celebrities and benefactors of the sixteenth century. Our own generation is pre-eminently an age of action. Let us hope that the *vates sacer* may even now be (in cradle, bassinet, or perambulator, or in one of the lower forms at some public school) on his way to give a voice and a lasting memorial to the great deeds of the heroic men and women whom it has produced.

BEHIND THE SCENES

POPULAR novelists and writers of sentimental essays are naturally fond of depicting the life of an actor behind the scenes, and contrasting it with what he appears to be on the stage. Shakspere had this thought in his mind when he exclaimed in the person of Macbeth

> Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more;

and he illustrated it by his pathetic sonnet (cx),

> Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there,
> And made myself a motley to the view,
> Gored[1] mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
> Made old offences of affections new . . .

and the still more pathetic cxi about the 'public means which public manners breeds'.

Since his day, this favourite theme has been treated in a variety of ways. We have had the clown cutting his jokes, with a broad grin on his face, while his child is dying; we have had endless novels about actors and actresses who create a *furore* by their assumption of an imaginary part, while their own hearts are breaking (this is on the novelist's authority) in consequence of some private sorrow; we have the biographies and autobiographies of real actors; and the impression left on most of our minds is that what goes on behind the scenes is 'real', while all that goes on upon the stage is what the children call 'pretence'.

The present pages will be devoted to discussing this subject, the writer's own conviction being (it may be said in advance), if not diametrically opposed to this popular notion, yet largely corrective of it. For while it is quite true that a noble and serious nature, like that of Macready, Mrs. Siddons, and

[1] 'Gored mine own thoughts' is a rather difficult phrase, but I am inclined to think Shakspere (with the image of the motley in his mind) was fancying his thoughts cut up into triangular strips, or *gores*, for patchwork—cheap adaptations of what deserved more reverential usage.

others, often revolts at the absurdities and trifles which it has to utter on the stage, yet taking the thing as a whole, there is no question that the dramatic instinct tends to elevate and not to lower humanity, and that the greatness of a nation, if not accurately measurable by the loftiness of its drama, is often reflected in it. It is not true that every great nation has a great drama (the Jews had none, and the Romans but little), but no great drama could ever be produced save by a great nation at its greatest epoch (witness Athens and Elizabethan England). When Shakspere spoke of 'his verse growing with this growing age', he gave us the key of the whole mystery.

The greatness of the drama lies in this, that it testifies to, and helps to stimulate, the *growth* of human society. Let us begin at the beginning, and see what goes on in every nursery. A child is a born actor. (The reader shall be spared the stock quotation from a well-known ode.) *Why* is he a born actor? Because he is always trying to work his way out of what he *is*, to what he wants to be. All these games that children play, are *their way of growing up*. So far from being unreal, they are aspiring towards a higher reality. When they play at nurse and doctor, they are unconsciously fitting themselves for grown-up life. Dr. Chalmers we know preached sermons in the nursery. Many a boy who has made a ship of the dining-room hassocks, has gained in this way a stimulus for a future life of adventure. The affections and the imagination play a large part in fitting us for our business, whatever it may be; the mere learning to love the idea of anything goes

a long way towards enabling us to realize it when the time comes. This is what we mean when we speak of 'vocation'.

Children are born actors; and conversely the dramatic instinct in mankind shows that we are still children, i.e. beings with a future, and that the 'realities' of the butcher and baker type with which we are surrounded are not the only, or the highest or most durable realities for us. And my contention is, with regard to actors (true actors, not people who only do it to get a living), that they are most truly and thoroughly themselves when they are on the stage. An actor is, more than the average man or woman, conscious of emotions and powers for which everyday life gives little or no scope; of cravings for ideal beauty, for entrance into that higher kingdom of the spirit and the imagination which, though never adequately realized in this world, is always *tended to* by everything in this world that is worth having.

Every one of us feels that he is capable of living a great many lives besides his own. Many a highly-gifted man can remember distinctly the pain of the moment when he first realized that he could only be one of the many things his boyhood had dreamt of. How many a bishop has only just missed being a first-rate lawyer! How many a surgeon has only just missed being a splendid draughtsman and artist! How many a man of business sometimes regrets that he has not become a clergyman or perhaps a public singer or reciter! And when we come to the life of the affections—to the motherly women who have no children, and all the long list of persons of both sexes who *could* have loved and toiled and

suffered for others in ways to which they have never been called, we feel the immense attraction the drama and the novel will always have, in enabling us thus to live in imagination what it will never be given us to live in experience.

The bearing of this remark on the question of a future state is obvious. I need scarcely say that I am not speaking here of the more degraded forms of the drama, though I should be quite willing to include in my list the best kind of *domestic* plays (which if not very highly poetical, at least show everyday life on its more imaginative and emotional side), and also *really* humorous plays. For if our imagination lifts us to an ideal world, our sense of humour does a good deal to break the trammels of conventionality, and thus give elbow-room to the imagination and the sympathetic faculties.

It must be added here that exactly in proportion as the modern drama becomes realistic it loses its hold of the highest reality. When I read of the 'get up' of *Henry VIII* at the Lyceum, I confess I put down the paper with a sigh.[1] It is just like giving children dolls with 'real' hair, railway-engines that *really* run on the carpet, and the like. How ignorant we are of the very essence of childhood, that glorious dower by which it can do for itself all that we try in vain to do for it! The child's imagination is more to it than many toy-shops; the poet's, the dramatist's, aye, the spectator's imagination is far more worth to him than all the scenic resources of the best-mounted play in London or in Paris. The imagination may indeed say, as was said by One

[1] Written in 1892.

infinitely higher and purer, that her kingdom is not of this world. A lower realization invariably tends to destroy the higher. Happily for us, we cannot grasp, we cannot make our own this winged loveliness, this aerial beauty. Catch a lark or a thrush and put it into a cage. You capture the creature's body, but you do it at the expense of its *effect upon your own spirit.* The function of a song-bird is to have something of mystery about it. You think you get closer to it by holding it in your hand ; you are in reality a great deal farther from it. It is no longer its best, its most precious self. You might as well think you saw a picture better by almost brushing the canvas with your eyelashes. In a certain sense a man would be speaking the truth who said, when he really got close to the San Sisto Madonna, it was only great coarse smudges of paint. That is what *he* would be pleased to call 'reality'. But he is only a parable of most of us ; of those who read biographies of celebrated men, and feel they have got to the real truth about them when they know all the foolish trifles that can be raked together about their private lives—who buy a photograph of a public character, and see on which side he parts his hair, or the lace with which her dress is trimmed—who patronize Society papers where the 'interviewer' chatters, truly or falsely, of the study-table of a hero or the wall-paper of a lady's boudoir—and who in more sacred matters think a close acquaintance with the topography or natural history of Palestine is of more importance than the spiritual ideas which the Bible sets before us—or who in any department of religious life, lose sight of the thing signified in the sign.

Let us look at the subject from another point of view. How difficult it is, at any one moment in life, to feel its full significance! Had we no other evidence that the present state of our being was a temporary and provisional one, we might find it perhaps in this. Take such a moment as that of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Who that was then present in Westminster Abbey could have appreciated to the full the significance—all that was meant, all that was recalled, all that was symbolized by the venerable building, the crowd of gorgeous figures, the throng of enthusiastic spectators, and the 'little old lady'—so a matter-of-fact person might with perfect truth (?) have called her—who was the centre of it all? Where was the reality of the Jubilee? Not in the stones of the Abbey, not in the air vibrating with music, not in the clothes, not in the bodies inside them, not in the tick of the Abbey clock as it counted the expiring hours. You could not put your finger upon it. You could not point to anything and say, '*Here* is the Jubilee'. It was nowhere. Even the actual sensations of those present, if you came to analyse them, would be found in many cases to have been largely of a physical or semi-physical kind—sensations perhaps of heat, crowding, headache, faintness, tight shoes or clothes, hunger, fatigue, and the like. These were 'real' enough (in a way). Still the Jubilee was the real thing, only *where* was it, and *when* did one experience it? One can tell where and when one's shoe pinches easily enough.

Have not many of us known the same thing in private life? Have not many of us felt the beauty of Tennyson's stanza,

Or that the Past will sometimes win
A glory from its being far,
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not, when we moved therein?

Supposing we have gone through a stirring time, a love-affair, a wedding, a great friendship first dawning on us, a time of bereavement, or whatever it may be, can we fix on any one moment in which the *thing* in all its fullness, in all its bearings, was wholly present with us? Take even a mountain walk. The beauty and delight of it all was strangely mingled at the time with minor physical sensations, and with an under-current of very commonplace thoughts. Perhaps three months after, looking over a sketch-book, or even taking out an old coat or gown not worn since those days, will bring the expedition *as a whole* more vividly before us than anything else could do. In a word, it seems as if Reality were never what some people call real.

Most of our lives are spent in the green-room, and behind the scenes, and are but a preparation for those few moments of vivid bliss which are granted to some of us, and which may be (if we will) granted to all of us. Or, to return to our original illustration, Human nature is still in its childhood. It is still working its way gradually up to the reception of, and the power to deal with, great ideas. People say, sometimes, '*Why* is it God's pleasure that we should have to go such a very roundabout way to the acquisition of the true reality?' We seem to have to burn up a great log of wood which has taken years to grow, to produce a flame which lasts for half an hour. The inspired moments of life are few, the prosy

ones are innumerable. Why does it take children so long to grow up? Why do they play at things for so many years before they are allowed seriously to do them? Why is the historical progress of human nature so slow? Why are we not taught it all by intuition? The answer to this question is altogether beyond us, though it is important to observe that as in childhood the mind and the body develop together, so in the life of nations and of humanity our ideas seem to develop themselves *pari passu* with our mechanical power of making use of them.

The Greek language and life had to exist before Plato could wield the one to express, and use the other to illustrate, his thoughts; while on the other hand our Authorised Version, our Shakspere, our Bunyan, were all ready written and deeply treasured in the heart of our English-speaking race before it spread to America and the colonies. Had they come later, how different would have been their fate! We cannot tell *why* human progress should have been so gradual; but, speaking practically and experimentally, it is surely very remarkable that when the world was first taught Christianity, which did arrive rapidly and, as it were, intuitively at some of the very results which mature and perfect Humanity might be expected in the far future to attain, it was only the few here and there, the choice, the elect souls, who seemed able to rise to its teaching. If we may reverently use such a phrase, it would seem as if the entrance of Christianity into the world were that of a mature, perfect, full-grown man into a nursery or schoolroom full of children. They are feeling their way towards Him. At times they reflect some portion

of His life. They echo one or two of His sayings (perhaps the words, sometimes, without the ideas). They would *like* to resemble Him more. He does in reality what they have been tentatively acting over and trying to perform by guesswork. He *is* what they have been dreaming they would like to be. They do not half comprehend Him ; but they long to do so. They see the wonderful results of His working, and would fain be taught the Worker's method ! Now they behold Him, they seem to have the tendencies of their own nature explained to them. They understand why they are growing, and how they are intended to develop. Is it not good for children to see, to look up to, to admire, grown-up people ? Is not their 'play', that imaginative life of theirs, tending to a realization of their best and truest selves ? And what manner of education is best for children ? That in which they are kept constantly with their coevals, and never allowed even to dream of being grown-up ; or that in which the shadows of their future selves are ever flung in front of them, in which a noble idea is ever before their eyes, and in which their very playthings and daily furniture are metamorphosed by the wondrous light of the Imagination, or by the still more potent ministry of Faith, into the theatre where they may rehearse what will some day be their *real* parts, and thus grow to a higher stature, and the measure of a perfected fullness ?

Is not this just what a great dramatic poet, a great actor, does in a lesser way for us all ? He lifts us for a moment on to a different plane. He is, in his own limited and imperfect sphere, an evangelist. Portia

and Antigone in their own degree are, to everyday life, what converse with grown-up people ought to be with children. Their heads are higher up, they can see over the wall. They know more of the true relations of things, of the real laws, as contrasted with the conventional rules, by which Life is governed. Perhaps we could not live with them always ; we are not ripe for it yet, but even when we are conscious of the strain and of the effort, we would not be without it. We know that they belong to the immortal order of things, that they are ministerial to somewhat higher than themselves : we would grow gradually fitter for their world ; to know that it exists, is something, to know that we have within us that which (however feebly and fitfully) responds to it, is even more.

JANE AUSTEN[1]

IN that delightful mine of correspondence which Lockhart has preserved for us in his *Life of Walter Scott*, we find the following extract from a letter to Joanna Baillie, bearing date February 10, 1822 :

'I expect Miss Edgeworth to be just what you describe—a being totally void of affectation ; and who, like one other lady of my acquaintance, carries her literary reputation as freely and easily as the milkmaid in my country does the *leglen*, which she carries on her head, and walks as gracefully with it as a duchess. Some of the

[1] *Jane Austen : Her Life and Letters. A Family Record.* By WILLIAM AUSTEN-LEIGH and RICHARD ARTHUR AUSTEN-LEIGH. (Smith, Elder & Co. 1913.) *The Novels of Jane Austen.* Various editions. And other Works.

fair sex, and some of the foul sex, too, carry their renown on a yoke and a pair of pitchers. The consequence is, that, besides poking frightfully, they are hitting everyone on the shins with their buckets. . . . By the way, did you know Miss Austen, authoress of some novels which have a great deal of nature in them?—nature in ordinary and middle life, to be sure, but valuable from its strong resemblance and correct drawing. I wonder which way she carried her pail?'

Had Scott lived a century later, he would have been able to answer his own question by referring to the delightful volume before us, which is due to the affection and industry of two living members of Jane Austen's family.

If the saying 'Happy is the nation which has no history!' could ever have been applied to an individual, that individual might well have been Jane Austen. The charming little girl with the brilliant eyes, whom we see reproduced in the most recent of her biographies, with bare neck and arms, and with the old-fashioned parasol in her hand, seems to carry a suggestion of bright leisurely English summer days in the garden of a country parsonage; there is a *joie de vivre* about her which seems to come from within, and to be—to a great extent—independent of circumstances. When we read her life, we find that it is as nearly lacking in incident as it is possible for that of an educated woman to be. Her migrations, if not exactly from 'the blue bed to the brown', are from one country home to another, or from thence to Bath, or London, or Winchester, and so forth. Her interests are almost entirely those of her own family, except those which arise later out of the publication and reception of her works, and the books she herself reads. She was a bright,

clever girl of thirteen when the trial of Warren Hastings, with whom her paternal aunt Mrs. Hancock and her family were intimately connected, took place; but we find no trace of it in her writings. The god-daughter of Hastings, her own first cousin Eliza Hancock, was married to the Comte de Feuillide, who was one of the victims of the guillotine; but here again it would be hard to find any allusion in Jane Austen's writings to the French Revolution. Nelson was in his full career of glory during her grown-up life; but, to judge from *Mansfield Park* and elsewhere, service in the navy was looked upon to a great extent in connexion with the prospect of prize-money, although we must not forget the beautiful tribute to the profession at the close of her last published work, *Persuasion*. 'How horrible it is to have so many people killed! And what a blessing that one cares for none of them!' is her comment, apparently on the battle of Albuera, 'the most bloodthirsty incident in the whole Peninsular war'. There is a striking reference to the death of Nelson in one of her brother's letters, but all she herself finds to say about the hero is apropos of Southey's *Life*. 'I am tired of Lives of Nelson; being that I never read any. I will read this, however, if Frank is mentioned in it.'[1] One or two rather problematical love-affairs, and a sad episode in the life of her sister Cassandra, doubtless help to give reality to her delineations of Emma, of Fanny Price, and above all of Anne Elliot. The flattering notice of George IV when Prince Regent, the growing popularity of her books, all just seem to point to future fame, when in

[1] *Jane Austen. A Family Record*, p. 283.

the very maturity of her powers a somewhat inexplicable illness attacks her and she dies before she has attained the age of forty-two.

Yet this uneventful existence has left us a legacy which the English nation prizes, and seems likely to prize, more and more as years go on. What, we may ask, is the secret of Jane Austen's abiding popularity?

Her exquisite, delicate humour, the freshness, sureness, and crispness of her touch, her power of character-drawing, her perfect refinement, her very considerable skill (developing as she herself developed) in the construction of a plot, the finish of her portraiture, have been often praised, from the days of Walter Scott[1] to our own; and it would seem needless to repeat what has been so well said already. But perhaps, as we get further from Jane Austen's own day, we recognize another merit in her works which could not have been equally evident to her contemporaries. The period of 'the Regency' is for most of us a synonym for tawdriness, bad taste, bad language, a drowsy Church life,[2] a low moral tone in high quarters, and that bitter spirit of criticism and discontent among the working classes which broke loose at last in riots and machine-smashing, and

[1] See *Quarterly Review* article by him, October 1815. The second article on Miss Austen, which Lockhart was tempted to ascribe to Scott (*Quarterly Review*, January 1821), was, as he afterwards found, from the pen of Whately, the future Archbishop.

[2] We are told that when Jane's brother Henry took Orders, rather late in life, and had been endeavouring, in preparation, to study the New Testament in the original, he went to be examined by the Bishop, who, after asking him some questions, put his hand on a book which lay near him on the table, and which happened to be a Greek Testament, and said: 'As for *this* book, Mr. Austen, I dare say it is some years since either you or I looked into it.' (p. 333.)

which we may see pictured in George Eliot's *Felix Holt.*

It is good for us to be reminded that the real strength of England lay in the quiet country homes such as Jane Austen depicts, where the religion, simple as it seems, was genuine, real, and absolutely without 'pose' or self-consciousness, where there was an unquestioning belief in the essentials of the Christian faith, and where, we may add, the boys were brought up to behave as gentlemen, and the girls as ladies, as a matter of course.

There was a steadiness about life in those days, an acceptance of certain fundamental truths and social axioms, which helped to form most valuable characters, and to train men and women to live in the world, to judge rightly, and to act decidedly in emergencies, and to make the English character what we have hitherto been proud to see it.

The present biographers of Jane Austen have done well to draw attention to the fact—characteristic of her class and generation—that she was always quietly caring for the poor. As they say:

'She was of course quite ignorant of the conditions of life in the great towns, and she had but little money to give, but work, teaching, and sympathy were freely bestowed on rustic neighbours. A very good criterion of her attitude towards her own characters is often furnished by their relations with the poor around them. Instances of this may be found in Darcy's care of his tenants and servants, in Anne Elliot's farewell visits to nearly all the inhabitants of Kellynch, and in Emma's benevolence and good sense when assisting her poorer neighbours.'[1]

In the same way, though the religious life of the

[1] p. 242.

period was most undemonstrative, it was, or could be, deeply real and sincere. The few allusions to religion in Jane Austen's books (as in those of her great contemporary Walter Scott) abundantly prove this. We may quote here a letter, included in the present biography, to a niece who is contemplating marriage:

'Mr. A. has advantages which we do not often meet in one person. His only fault, indeed, seems modesty. . . . . And, as to there being any objection from his *goodness*, from the danger of his becoming even evangelical, I cannot admit *that*. I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be evangelicals, and am at least persuaded that they who are so from reason and feeling must be happiest and safest.'[1]

At the close of her next letter she says (evidently in reply to her correspondent):

'I cannot suppose we differ in our ideas of the Christian religion. You have given an excellent description of it. We only affix a different meaning to the word *evangelical*.'

These letters were written in 1814, about three years before her death. A characteristic shrinking from notoriety is thus illustrated (September 25, 1813). Speaking of her brother's zeal in spreading her fame, she says:

'I know it is all done from affection and partiality, but at the same time let me here again express to you and Mary my sense of the *superior* kindness which you have shown on the occasion in doing what I wished. I am trying to harden myself. After all, what a trifle it is, in all its bearings, to the really important point of one's existence, even in this world.'[2]

We who live in these days when 'problems' of all

[1] p. 344. [2] p. 281.

kinds are calling out for solution, and the very Creed of our forefathers is being attacked and questioned, find comfort in returning even in imagination to the days of the early nineteenth century, before these fierce controversies had arisen, and to the simple, dutiful, straightforward, and unpretending characters of those men and women whose blood runs in our own veins, and on whose 'reserves' of moral and spiritual, as well as of physical, force we are living our own strenuous, over-excited, and, too often, superficial lives.

Apart, however, from these higher matters, there is a considerable interest in Jane Austen's works as offering pictures of English life before the days of railways, chloroform, and electricity. After all, the homes of our forefathers were by no means devoid of comfort. Wages were less, and they had relatively more servants. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Mrs. Dashwood (a lady of limited means) is dining alone with her daughters, and they are waited on by a manservant and have wine and dessert. A fire in one's bedroom, lit before one rises in the morning, is a luxury which few guests would now expect, except in illness.[1] Wine was a good deal more drunk than it would be now. When Fanny Price turns faint after a hot walk, her considerate cousin Edmund goes to the side table and pours her out a glass of madeira (we notice the absence of soda or seltzer water, luxuries not so common then as now). Breakfasts were pretty solid. We recall the cold pork bones and mustard on William's plate, and the broken egg-shells on Mr. Crawford's, in *Mansfield Park*.[2]

[1] See *Sense and Sensibility*, chap. xxix. [2] Chap. xxix.

But except a tray of sandwiches or some equally light refreshment there was no further feeding till dinner at about four, or possibly five, in the afternoon.

This gave space for a long evening, for protracted sittings over wine and walnuts, followed by tea and various games, whist, speculation, brag, and others, or by music and singing, &c. Tea was made and poured out by the young lady of the house. Lady Bertram (*Mansfield Park*) seems to have been incapable of performing even this slight duty for herself. Apparently no one ever thought of doing anything from dinner till bedtime. Mr. Elton, the clergyman in *Emma*, was haunted when dining at Randalls by no uneasy sense of unfulfilled duties in the way of evening classes or lectures.

One of Mr. Elton's most characteristic speeches is when he finds himself driving *tête-à-tête* with Emma:

'What an excellent device [said he] the use of a sheepskin for carriages! How very comfortable they make it! impossible to feel cold with such precautions. The contrivances of modern days, indeed, have rendered a gentleman's carriage perfectly complete. One is so fenced and guarded from the weather that not a breath of air can find its way in unpermitted. . . . Ha! snows a little, I see.'

While on the subject of carriages it may be remarked that while the stage coach was the cheapest, and sometimes the only possible, mode of locomotion, those who could afford it travelled by post-chaise. Thus, in *Sense and Sensibility* Mrs. Jennings sends her maid by coach, and travels post with the two young ladies, and the Misses Steel economize by getting 'the Doctor' to share a post-chaise with them. No one will ever forget the Sucklings'

barouche-landau as eulogized by Mrs. Elton. The men of the party often rode (e.g. Edmund in *Mansfield Park*, chap. viii, beside the carriage,—Henry Crawford's barouche, which contained the ladies), and so we find Jane Austen's own brother Henry 'kindly attending' her 'on horseback, riding in the rain nearly all the way', from Chawton to Winchester[1] (*Memoirs*, p. 390). Frank Churchill rides from Highbury to London and back; and Mr. Knightley is pretty constantly on horseback, while even the timid Fanny Price is obliged to learn to ride. John Thorpe's curricle has been immortalized in *Northanger Abbey*, as well as General Tilney's chaise and four.[2]

'The bustle of going was not pleasant. The clock struck ten while the trunks were carrying down, and the General had fixed to be out of Milsom Street by that hour. His great coat, instead of being brought down for him to put on directly, was spread out in the curricle in which he was to accompany his son. The middle seat of the chaise was not drawn out, though there were three people to go in it; and his daughter's maid had so crowded it with parcels that Miss Morland would not have room to sit . . . . and she had some difficulty in saving her own new writing-desk from being thrown out into the street. At last, however, the door was closed upon the three females, and they set off at the sober pace in which the handsome, highly-fed four horses of a gentleman usually perform a journey of thirty miles. . . . The tediousness of a two hours' bait at Petty France . . . next followed; and her admiration of the style in which they travelled, of the fashionable chaise and four, postillions

[1] In September 1813, she thus describes a family move: 'My brother, Fanny, Lizzie, Marianne and I composed this division of the family and filled his carriage inside and out. Two post-chaises, under the escort of George, conveyed eight more across the country, the chair brought two, two others came on horseback, and the rest by coach, and so, by one means or another, we are all removed. It puts me in mind of St. Paul's shipwreck, when all are said, by different means, to reach the shore in safety' (p. 279).

[2] Chap. xx.

handsomely liveried, rising so regularly in their stirrups, and numerous outriders, properly mounted, sunk a little under this consequent inconvenience.'

After a while the General resigns his place in the curricle to her, to her great delight.

'The merits of the curricle did not all belong to the horses. Henry drove so well, so quietly, without making any disturbance, without parading to her, or swearing at them! . . . and then his hat sat so well! and the innumerable capes of his great coat looked so becomingly important! To be driven by him, next to dancing with him, was certainly the greatest happiness in the world.'[1]

From this description one would hardly gather that Henry Tilney was a clergyman!

Perhaps *Northanger Abbey* throws more light than any other of Jane Austen's books on the comfort and civilization which existed in England a hundred years ago. One little incident,[2] that of Catherine being awakened 'by the housemaid's folding back her shutters' in the morning, reminds us of a feature which has almost disappeared from modern houses. The appointments of General Tilney's house (Northanger Abbey) give a very good idea of the luxuries of our forefathers.

'The elegance of the breakfast-set forced itself on Catherine's notice . . . and, luckily, it had been the General's own choice. He was enchanted by her approbation of his taste, confessed it to be neat and simple, thought it right to encourage the manufacture of his country; and for his part, to his uncritical palate, the tea was as well-flavoured from the clay of Staffordshire as from that of Dresden or Sèvres.'

In the course of Catherine's visit she is introduced

[1] Chap. xx. [2] Chap. xxii.

to 'a village of hothouses' and the General talks about 'the pinery which only yielded a hundred last year'. The kitchen (originally monastic) is 'rich in the massy walls and smoke of former days, and in the stoves and hot closets of the present. . . . Wherever they went, some pattened girl stopped to courtesy, or some footman in deshabille sneaked off'.[1] By the way, does any one wear pattens now? They were common enough fifty years ago. The late Mrs. Tilney's bedroom is surreptitiously visited by Catherine; and we are told,[2]

'She saw a large, well-proportioned apartment, a handsome dimity bed, arranged with a housemaid's care, a bright Bath-stove, mahogany wardrobes, and neatly-painted chairs, on which the beams of a western sun gaily poured through two sash windows.'

Perhaps some of our readers may know exactly what is meant by a Bath-stove, and also what are the characteristics of a 'Rumford', referred to at the close of chapter xx, as a substitute for a more ancient fireplace. Apparently General Tilney's hothouses were intended chiefly for fruit, for the only flower which excites Catherine's admiration is a hyacinth, which is not very extraordinary in the month of April! It will be remembered that in *Mansfield Park* Fanny Price cherishes her pet geraniums in the East room,[3] and that Mrs. Grant has some 'plants', apparently myrtles, about which she is solicitous.[4] But probably among our more modern luxuries we may count an abundance of flowers at nearly all seasons of the year; new varieties of the old ones, and others which were till recently unknown. Many of us are old

[1] Chap. xxiii. [2] Chap. xxiv. [3] Chap. xvi. [4] Chap. xxii.

enough to remember the rise and progress of the chrysanthemum; and also the time when bananas, which are now within the reach of the poorest, were only to be seen as rarities. The mention of flowers naturally suggests poetry and literature. When we think of Scott's enormous field of reading, and his wonderful memory for what he read, we are tempted to agree with Jane Austen's estimate of herself that she was 'the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress'.[1]

In *Persuasion*, Jane Austen's last and most touching novel, we are introduced to a poetical Captain Benwick, with whom Anne Elliot has literary discussions,

'trying to ascertain whether *Marmion* or *The Lady of the Lake* were to be preferred, and how ranked *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*, and moreover, how the *Giaour* was to be pronounced, he showed himself so intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet, and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other; he repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imaged a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so entirely as if he meant to be understood, that she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry . . . and to recommend a larger allowance of prose in his daily study.'[2]

We find Benwick quoting Lord Byron's 'dark blue seas' again in chapter xii, and he and Louisa Musgrove are supposed to have 'fallen in love with one another over poetry'.[3]

Nor is the early eighteenth century quite overlooked, for does not Mrs. Elton quote Gray's *Elegy*, and is not *Kitty a fair but frozen maid*, which poor Mr. Woodhouse strove so hard to remember, from the pen of David Garrick?

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 320. [2] Chap. xi. [3] Chap. xviii.

That Jane had Shakspere at her fingers' ends is plain from countless passages both in her books and letters. We find *Hamlet* read aloud in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Henry VIII* in *Mansfield Park*. But to collect all the allusions to Shakspere would be impossible, within our present limits.

Her admiration for Crabbe was so great that she always professed she would gladly have become 'Mrs. Crabbe', and we see his name occurs in *Mansfield Park*[1] where Edmund looks at Fanny's books, and says,

> 'You in the meanwhile will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord Macartney go on? (opening a volume on the table, and then taking up some others). And here are Crabbe's *Tales*, and the *Idler*, to relieve you, if you tire of your great book.'

Fanny herself quotes Cowper's *Task* ('The Sofa')[2]:

> Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn
> Your fate unmerited,

and so does Emma, apropos of Jane Fairfax and her difficulties,

> The world is not their [friend], nor the world's law.

'With what intense desire [she] wants [her] home' in *Mansfield Park* is from Cowper's *Tirocinium*, and the passage about 'Cowper and his fire'[3] at twilight, 'Myself creating what I saw', is also alluded to (*Emma*, chap. xli).[4]

[1] Chap. xvi. [2] Chap. vi.

[3] Cowper's *Task*, 'The Winter Evening'.

[4] In *Sense and Sensibility* (chap. x) 'Cowper and Scott' are bracketed as two leading poets; and in chap. xvii some one says of Marianne and her love of expense 'And books! Thomson, Cowper, Scott—she would buy them all over and over again . . . and she would have every book that tells her how to admire an old twisted tree'. Is this a hit at Wordsworth's 'Thorn'?

Jane Austen was evidently fresh from the study of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* when she wrote *Mansfield Park*, for at the end of chapter xxviii we find Fanny Price at a hint from Sir Thomas slipping quietly from the empty ball-room, 'stopping at the entrance-door, like the Lady of Branxholm Hall "one moment and no more" to view the happy scene, and take a last look at the five or six determined couple, who were still hard at work'; and in the scene, interesting on other grounds, in the private chapel at Sotherton (chap. ix), we find a reference to the moonlight scene in Melrose Abbey in the same poem.

'"I am disappointed," said she, in a low voice to Edmund. "This is not my idea of a chapel. There is nothing awful here, nothing melancholy, nothing grand. Here are no aisles, no arches, no inscriptions, no banners. No banners, cousin, to be 'blown by the night wind of heaven'. No signs that a 'Scottish monarch sleeps below'." . . . Mrs. Rushworth began her relation. "This chapel was fitted up as you see it in James II's time. Before that period, as I understand, the pews were only wainscot, and there is some reason to think that the linings and cushions of the pulpit and family seat were only of purple cloth; but this is not quite certain. It is a handsome chapel, and was formerly in constant use both morning and evening. Prayers were always read in it by the domestic chaplain, within the memory of many: but the late Mr. Rushworth left it off."

'"Every generation has its improvements," said Miss Crawford, with a smile, to Edmund. . . . "It is a pity," cried Fanny, "that the custom should have been discontinued. It was a valuable part of former times. There is something in a chapel and chaplain so much in character with a great house, with one's ideas of what such a household should be! A whole family assembling regularly for the purpose of prayer is fine."

'"Very fine indeed," said Miss Crawford, laughing. "It must do the heads of the family a great deal of good to force all the poor housemaids and footmen to leave business and pleasure, and say

their prayers here twice a day, while they are inventing excuses themselves for staying away."

'"That is hardly Fanny's idea of a family assembling," said Edmund. "If the master and mistress do not attend themselves, there must be more harm than good in the custom."

'"At any rate, it is safer to leave people to their own devices on such subjects. . . . Cannot you imagine with what unwilling feelings the former belles of the house of Rushworth did many a time repair to this chapel? The young Mrs. Eleanors and Mrs. Bridgets, starched up into seeming piety, but with heads full of something very different—especially if the poor chaplain were not worth looking at—and, in those days, I fancy parsons were very inferior even to what they are now."

'For a few moments she was unanswered. Fanny coloured and looked at Edmund, but felt too angry for speech; and he needed a little recollection before he could say "Your lively mind can hardly be serious even on serious subjects. You have given us an amusing sketch, and human nature cannot say it was not so. We must all feel at times the difficulty of fixing our thoughts as we could wish; but if you are supposing it a frequent thing, that is to say, a weakness grown into habit from neglect, what could be expected from the private devotions of such persons? . . . The mind which does not struggle against itself under one circumstance would find objects to distract it in the other, I believe, and the influence of the place and of example may often rouse better feelings than are begun with. The greater length of the service, however, I admit to be sometimes too hard a stretch upon the mind. One wishes it were not so; but I have not yet left Oxford long enough to forget what chapel prayers are".'

The passage just quoted is a good example of Jane Austen's more serious style; but does not, of course, do justice to her strong sense of humour. As has often, however, been said, the humour is so delicate and so interpenetrative that it is difficult to give examples of it in extracts; and her writings are so well known that it would be almost waste of time to attempt it. But we feel sure that our readers will thank us for advising them to turn once more to the

description of the ball at the 'Crown' and to countless other passages in *Emma*, to Miss Crawford's letter in *Mansfield Park*, or that of Isabella Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey*, to the brilliant scene between Captain Wentworth, Mrs. Croft, and Mrs. Musgrove in the latter's drawing-room in *Persuasion*, to the figures of Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine in *Pride and Prejudice*, or the dialogue between Mrs. Norris and Sir Thomas in *Mansfield Park*. The list might be greatly lengthened. But perhaps it would be more profitable to inquire into the circumstances to which—in part at least—this characteristic seems to be due. The present writer has long cherished a theory that there is a kind of English humour which often, if not always, goes hand-in-hand with conservatism. It seems to be the product of an orderly, comfortable state of society where a 'fierce indignation' is almost entirely lacking. To the well-born, well-bred, prosperous Englishman innovations of all kinds are as absurd as they were to Aristophanes and his admirers. We see this copiously illustrated in the *Anti-Jacobin* and in our beloved *Punch*, where the humour is seldom, if ever, bitter, but unsparingly directed against innovations of all kinds. Jane Austen's humour was seldom roused by innovations, for the simple reason that they hardly ever came in her way, but she has the happy temperament which finds entertainment in trifles, and the little quaintnesses and absurdities of domestic life.

Throughout her novels or her correspondence we never find a religious enthusiast or a would-be prophet. She does not, we think, once mention the 'Lake' school of poetry, but there are hints here and

there that they would have found little mercy at her hands had she done so. The people she lives amongst are all 'nice'. Again, though she is unsparing in her ridicule of vulgarity, even her vulgar people all wear kid gloves. One feels sure she never knew what it was to be destitute of small comforts and proprieties. She had never 'roughed' it. She could no more have created Sam Weller than she could Bill Sikes. Yet there is a *fineness* about her humour for which we possibly might find a parallel in the days of Madame de Sévigné, but hardly anywhere else among her predecessors; although it may be believed that, had Cowper not come under the unfortunate influences that he did, and had his mental health not been impaired, he might have produced work of an equally brilliant kind. As it is, we find traces of delightful humour both in his poems and his letters. There was a great affinity between the two minds, but the *mens sana in corpore sano* was Jane Austen's especial privilege.

We cull a few extracts at random from her letters, when she is most thoroughly at her ease, and not dreaming of publicity.

To Martha Lloyd.

Nov. 12, 1800.

'You distress me cruelly by your request about books. I cannot think of any to bring with me, nor have I any idea of our wanting them. I come to you to be talked to, not to read or hear reading; I can do that at home; and indeed I am now laying in a stock of intelligence to pour out on you as my share of the conversation. I am reading Henry's *History of England*, which I will repeat to you in any manner you may prefer, either in a loose, desultory, unconnected stream, or dividing my recital, as the historian divides it himself, into seven parts:—The Civil and Military: Religion: Con-

stitution: Learning and Learned Men: Arts and Sciences: Commerce, Coins, and Shipping: and Manners. So that for every evening in the week there will be a different subject. The Friday's lot—Commerce, Coins, and Shipping—you will find the least entertaining; but the next evening's portion will make amends. With such a provision on my part, if you will do yours by repeating the French Grammar, and Mrs. Stent will now and then ejaculate some wonder about the cocks and hens, what can we want?'[1]

To Cassandra Austen.

Feb. 8, 1807.

'Our garden is putting in order by a man who bears a remarkably good character, has a very fine complexion, and asks something less than the first . . . We mean to get a few of the better kind [of roses], and at my own particular desire he procures us some syringas. I could not do without a syringa, for the sake of Cowper's line.[2] We talk also of a laburnum. . . .

'What is become of all the shyness in the world? Moral as well as natural diseases disappear in the progress of time, and new ones take their place. Shyness and the sweating sickness have given way to confidence and paralytic complaints.'[3]

To the Same.

Jan. 24, 1809.

'I am gratified by [Fanny's] having pleasure in what I write, but I wish the knowledge of my being exposed to her discerning criticism may not hurt my style, by inducing too great a solicitude. I begin already to weigh my words and sentences more than I did, and am looking about for a sentiment, an illustration, or a metaphor in every corner of the room. Could my ideas flow as fast as the rain in the store closet it would be charming.'[4]

To a niece who was trying her hand at novel-writing.

Sep. 28, 1814.

'Devereux Forester's being ruined by his vanity is extremely good, but I wish you would not let him plunge into a "vortex of

[1] *Jane Austen*, pp. 149–50.

[2] See *The Task*, 'The Winter Walk at Noon,' lines 149–50:

Laburnum rich
In streaming gold; Syringa, ivory pure.

[3] pp. 199–200. [4] p. 227.

dissipation". I do not object to the thing, but I cannot bear the expression; it is such thorough novel slang, and so old that I daresay Adam met with it in the first novel he opened.'

To Cassandra Austen.

Dec. 2, 1815.

'I am sorry my mother has been suffering, and am afraid this exquisite weather is too good to agree with her. *I* enjoy it all over me, from top to toe, from right to left, longitudinally, perpendicularly, diagonally; and I cannot but selfishly hope we are to have it last till Christmas—nice, unwholesome, unseasonable, relaxing, close, muggy weather.'[2]

On one occasion we think she is a little hard on Mrs. D— apropos of the *Rejected Addresses*[3]:

'I began talking to her a little about them, and expressed my hope of their having amused her. Her answer was "Oh dear, yes, very much, very droll indeed—the opening of the House and the striking up of the fiddles!" What she meant, poor woman, who shall say? I sought no farther.'

Surely Jane must have forgotten the brilliant parody on her favourite, Crabbe, part of which we venture to reproduce.

> See to their desks Apollo's sons repair—
> Swift rides the rosin o'er the horse's hair.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Now all seems hushed—but no, one fiddle will
> Give, half-ashamed, a tiny flourish still.
> Foiled in his crash, the leader of the clan
> Reproves with frowns the dilatory man:
> Then on his candlestick thrice taps his bow,
> Nods a new signal, and away they go.'
>
> *Rejected Addresses*, No. xvii.

But there is no end to these delightful extracts,

[1] p. 293. [2] p. 317. [3] p. 259.

nor have we space to insert some others of a graver character, especially those relating to the death of her brother's wife,[1] which are written with a depth and delicacy of feeling which show that had Jane Austen been destitute of a spark of the genius which has made her immortal she would still have been one of the best and most lovable of women. We seem to be allowed to see her character growing, from that enjoyment of life and sheer playfulness which it early displayed, to one of greater maturity and earnestness, while the humour mellows and sweetens to the last. 'I do not suppose she ever in her life said a sharp thing,' was the verdict of one of her nieces.[2]

We can only refer in passing to the touching account of her death given by her devoted sister Cassandra. We love to think of her last hours, passed within sound of the Cathedral chimes, in the little house, still standing, which no pilgrim to Winchester should forget to visit, and that the glorious building which she loved so well should afford a resting-place for all that mortality could claim of so beautiful a nature.

It has so happened that a considerable portion of this article has been written at Leatherhead, a place which has—to our minds—the strongest possible claim to be identified with Highbury (in *Emma*). The claims of Leatherhead have been thoroughly discussed in the volume before us. The similarity of many local and personal names; the distance from London, the general character of the place, the fact that Jane Austen knew the neighbourhood intimately, all seem to point the same way: it is still 'airy,

[1] p. 213. [2] p. 240.

cheerful, and happy-looking', and has many nooks and corners which one can fancy those bright hazel eyes—a characteristic which Jane Austen and her heroine had in common—gazing on with keen powers of observation. Happily for Jane Austen, and still more happily for Emma, she could never have been there, as it was our lot to be, on a Bank Holiday, with a constant succession of motors and other traffic making the day hideous. One could see the shadowy, shuddering form of old Mr. Woodhouse gazing in horror at it all from an upper window! Such an experience makes us feel how the world has changed and is changing. But human nature alters very little, whether it surveys the world from a 'motor-car' or a 'barouche-landau'. And so long as human nature remains what it is, the works of Jane Austen will never be out of date.[1]

The old church, the picturesque churchyard in which it stands, can have altered but little since her time: the chiming clock may have told the hours as faithfully in her lifetime as it does now, and as we stand beneath the tower we think admiringly not only of the brilliant genius which has shed its light on the place, but of the beautiful and truly womanly soul which clung, alike in life and death, to the faith of a Christian, and of the warm loving heart which showed itself, not only in her works, but in her whole being.

[1] For the identification of Highbury with Leatherhead, see a letter by Mrs. Trebeck in the *Times Literary Supplement* for Thursday, June 13, 1918.

ANDREA DEL SARTO[1]

NOBODY but a poet can understand a picture, and a picture that a poet can make nothing of is unworthy of the name. This is of course a broad way of speaking, but when we think how many poets there are who have never written a line, and how many so-called painters had much better have never been taught to handle a brush, perhaps we may be forgiven for making use of it. It has often seemed little more than an accident that has prevented our poets from being painters, though perhaps comparatively few painters have been likely to become poets. The power of expression through the medium of form and colour is more likely to give a man a happy life than the higher, more uncertain, and more agitating gift of poetical composition. Even a tolerable sketch gives pleasure, and is at once intelligible, but a tolerable poem is generally owned to be much the same thing as an intolerable one.

When Goethe threw that knife into the water which was to decide on his becoming painter or poet as the case might be, we may think ourselves fortunate that the oracle was not at all events decisive in favour of painting; but with any smaller man than Goethe it would perhaps have been well if he had actually seen the knife descend into the water, instead of merely hearing the splash it made among the willows; and devoted himself to an art in which

[1] A paper read at a 'Browning Society' meeting, Oxford, 1880–81.

there are more small prizes and fewer blanks than in poetry.

Those who interest themselves about the transmission of hereditary qualities will not have overlooked the fact that Mr. Browning had a son who obtained considerable success as a painter ; and will be disposed to argue back from that circumstance to the probability of some similar talent being possessed by his father. But apart from this we cannot have failed to notice how many of Mr. Browning's poems are upon, or show strong sympathy with, art and artists, with 'the wronged soul of an ancient master' whose frescoes are peeling day by day from conventual or palace walls, with the angel that Dante and the angel that Guercino drew, and the 'shrinking Caryatides' that haunted the childhood of Sordello ; with the Bishop who mingles sacred and classical art so impartially in his tomb at Santa Prassede, and the 'dear dead women' with their golden hair who live for us on the canvas of Titian, Bonifazio, and Palma Vecchio. Above all do we see this in the two poems, masterpieces themselves, about Andrea del Sarto and Fra Filippo Lippi, which, looking at Art as they do from points rather mutually complementary than opposed, may be said to comprise the sum of Browning's opinions on what the aspirations and labours of a painter ought to be.

If we sought, however, for an analogue to Browning among painters, we should I think find it rather in Rembrandt than in any Italian artist. The little etching called the 'Seller of rat poison' is exactly like a poem of Browning's in black and white. The wonderful work of 'Christ before Pilate' has all

Browning's fearless realism, as well as his imaginative force and serious earnestness. Neither poet nor painter cares how ugly he makes a thing if he can only express his thought ; both are keenly alive to the sublimity of moral ideas clothed in the beggarliest of rags, both give us flashes of the most precious light relieved against masses of obscurity. Pure beauty is rarely met with in either. Both seem to have thrown to the winds the dictum of Horace that poems should not only be noble, but attractive. Both are keenly fascinated by the Jews, though Rembrandt's Jews are mostly rich people in furs and gold chains, and Browning's persecuted victims in tatters. Both love to give a somewhat realistic treatment to religious topics—Rembrandt's 'Joseph interpreting his dream' is almost humorous in its life-like portraiture. Poems like *Saul* and the *Death in the Desert* are both attempts to give something like photographic vividness to characters which are depicted in Scripture with a grandeur and simplicity of which no modern writer has the secret.

But this poem on Andrea del Sarto is more Italian, not only in its subject but its treatment, than many others. The silk runs smoother off the reel, there are fewer knots and kinks and hitches than in some other threads of the author's spinning. The lines flow with an unwonted grace. The setting of the poem is a picture in itself, suggested we need not say by the portrait of Andrea del Sarto in the Palazzo Pitti at Florence, as he looks appealingly at his wife and seems to remind her of his generosity to her, as indicated by the paper she holds in her hand. There is a suggestion of Shelley and his 'Did you not hear

the Aziola cry?' in the twilight evening with the cue-owls calling one to another, the compline bell tolling out from Fiesole, Mount Morello gradually paling into grey, and the first star coming out. So again what can be more felicitous in its way, more different from the jingle of:

> Such are the sorrowful chances
> If you talk fine to King Francis,

than the following:

> That Francis, that first time,
> And that long festal year at Fontainebleau.
> I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
> Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
> In that humane great monarch's golden look,
> One finger in his beard or twisted curl,
> Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
> One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
> The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
> I painting proudly with his breath on me,
> All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
> Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
> Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts—
> And best of all this, this, this face beyond,
> This in the background, waiting on my work
> To crown the issue with a last reward!

It is scarcely necessary to recall the main facts of Andrea's life, his brilliant promise, his high favour with Francis I, his abuse of the confidence of his royal patron, whose money he took without ever making him an adequate return, his gradual deterioration both as a man and an artist, under the influence of his beautiful but extravagant and unscrupulous wife; and his death of the plague at the early age of forty-two. Mr. Browning has chosen the moment near the close of Andrea's life when he felt the evils of

debt and disgrace crowding in upon him, and missed the internal support which self-respect, and a consciousness of well-employed talents, give to a man even when least successful, no less than the sympathy of the woman for whom he appears to have sacrificed himself. A situation of more pathos it would be difficult to conceive, and it is treated in a manner that makes it impossible to forget.

In reading *Andrea del Sarto* we feel that Browning has himself been studying form, manipulation, 'technique' with unwonted care. The suavity of Italian life and Italian art has breathed upon him, and has tempered the roughness of his northern descent. Yet he feels more acutely than ever the need of the inner life and spirit of art. It is perhaps not without some reference to his own difficulties and struggles that he makes Andrea say of the artists whose aspirations are above their power of execution :[1]

> There burns a truer light of God in them,
> In their vexed, beating, stuffed, and pent-up brain,
> Heart, or whatever else, than goes to prompt
> This low-pulsed, forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
> Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know
> Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,

[1] We may be reminded of the fine speech of Theseus in the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*:

> Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
> To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
> Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
> Make periods in the midst of sentences,
> Throttle their practised accent in their fears,
> And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
> Not paying me a welcome: trust me, sweet,
> Out of this silence, yet I picked a welcome,
> And in the modesty of fearful duty
> I read as much, as from the rattling tongue
> Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
> Love therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
> In least, speak most to my capacity.

> Enter and take their place there, sure enough,
> Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
> My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
> . . . . . .
> Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what 's a Heaven for?

In fact a painter who can exactly represent what is in his mind, is like a bee with its honeycomb, a bird with its nest, an animal with a fulfilled ideal; and one does not see why in his case there should be any difference between the spirit of a man that goeth upward, and that of a beast that goeth downward. Each has done all he wanted to do, and on this side of the grave.

It would be as difficult to argue in favour of the immortality of the soul from the pictures of Snyders, Weenix, Teniers, and Paul Potter, as it would from those versifiers who fill up the volumes of our seldom-opened British poets in a large portion of the eighteenth century with their polished, well-expressed platitudes. Of works produced by men of this class the world has had enough; and of the dullness which had its climax in the great yawn of the goddess in the *Dunciad*. But when the case is that of a man who knew and approved the higher course yet followed the lower, we are not sensible so much of tedium as of pain and disappointment. We look at a Dutch picture with the feeling that the painter, if he had not painted onions and white satin to the life, would never have painted at all. Quite different is the emotion with which we see a great talent desecrated or conventionalized, and hear

> the world applaud the hollow ghost
> Which blamed the living man.

When we see what was once an inspiration become a stage trick, and what was once a real expression of feeling become a mere social formula, when we see the robes that the spirit wove for itself picked up by the unspiritual and paraded about till they are so shapeless and threadbare that their old owner would never recognize them, what can we do but turn our eyes sorrowfully from a sight which, more than any other, makes us feel the pitiable poverty of some even the most highly gifted among mankind.

We look once more at the engraving of the picture from the Pitti. Surely never was picture more eloquent. How could a painter so catch his own character ?—the tired, sad eyes, the drooping muscles around the mouth, the uncared-for look of the whole man ? And then the round fullmoon-like beauty of the impassive woman opposite :

> My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
> Which everybody looks on, and calls his,
> And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
> While she looks—no one's ; very dear, no less.

Her face seems to explain his—the low-pitched aspirations above which his soul, capable of higher things, was content to fold its wings, is the key to all the disappointments, the weariness, the sorrow one reads in the piteous countenance beside her.

A character of this type has an almost painful fascination for us, us English people of the present day, because we have an uneasy feeling that it is only too like ourselves. We, too, seem to be trading no the heritage of our youth. We see it in the passion for revivals (I do not mean in a religious but in an aesthetic sense) that exists among us, much as it did

in the later days of Roman history. We see it in dress, in furniture, in literature. We see it in the 'cultus' of childhood, quite a different thing from the love of children, which is so characteristic of our own times, and which bids fair to make our children little bundles of affectation. We see it in the kind of outside patronage given to religion, as a picturesque element which could ill be spared from our social life; we see it in the cockneyism which desecrates our beautiful scenery, and turns to account the utterance wrung out of some poet or patriot in the moments of keenest emotion, to advertise a railway hotel. We see it in the way in which the graceful time-honoured usages of country life, and sometimes things more sacred still, are made capital of by the cheap and the popular playwright. We feel it, too, in ourselves; conscious as we often are, that what we want is not the power of saying things, but something to say. We seem to have got everything but ideas; everything but that spirit without which the body of Art may truly be accounted dead. We cannot get back the springtime of our lives, and we exclaim sadly with the poet, as our compline bell rings out:

> The last monk leaves the garden,
> And autumn grows, autumn in everything.

Since the great war of 1914, circumstances are, it is needless to say, considerably changed. The war has been productive of some beautiful and touching poetry; but it still remains to be seen whether a real regeneration has taken, or will take place in the near future. Of this posterity only will be able to judge.

But it is not alone in the realm of the imagina-

tion but in that of the heart, that man's present life is often a miserable falling-off from the golden promise of his past. Andrea del Sarto is doubly disappointed; as an artist, and as a husband. But in the first case he is vexed with himself, because he has lost the power of having any noble ideal that transcends his power of execution:

> I do what many dream of all their lives:
> Dream? strive to do, aye agonize to do
> And fail in doing.

But he *has* an ideal of what his wife ought to be (husbands are apt to have this), and is grieved because he cannot see it realized in her. He is not only vexed at having so little mind himself, but angry with her because she has not supplemented his deficiencies,

> But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
> And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
> And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
> The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare,—
> Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
> Some women do so.

It is true that he owns afterwards that incentives come from the soul's self. The rest avail not. But to judge from the whole tone of the poem there is no doubt that he implies his inferiority as a man and artist to be greatly his wife's fault.

Now here I must say I think Andrea del Sarto, and Mr. Browning speaking by his mouth, are just as unfair on women as most other sons of Adam. The painter marries, apparently entirely led by the eye, a lady who will save him the expense of a model for his Madonnas, and then complains of her for being

worldly, stupid, and unsympathetic. Surely the fault lay with himself. If he had exercised a little more judgement, and had not acted so rashly, he surely might have found a better, though perhaps a less beautiful wife. It is too foolish to encumber yourself with a second-rate partner first, and then abuse her for her inferiority afterwards. Michael Angelo knew better than that. Perhaps, however, this was part of Mr. Browning's art, to make us feel what a poor creature Andrea del Sarto really was. And that the poet should dwell strongly on this point is easily conceivable when we remember that nine years before writing this (1846, the poem dates 1855) he had had the almost incredible good fortune to meet with a woman who was to him not only the most affectionate of wives but the most intelligent and sympathetic of companions, with a character as lofty and unworldly as her genius was rare and highly cultivated. Could anything have made the selfish sensuous beauty of the Pitti more intolerable, it would have been the daily contrast with one whose hold on physical existence seemed so slight, whose indifference to externals was so complete, and whose realization of the invisible world was almost like an intuition.

Be this as it may, the poem before us is of great value in revealing to us two important characteristics of human nature, its aspirations after infinity, and its high conception of love.

If a work of art differs from a cobweb or a honeycomb, in its infinite range and its suggestions of something above and beyond itself, much more do our human affections transcend the instinctive movements of animal nature. It seems a difference not in

degree only but also in kind which exists between the animals and man, capable as he is, not only of these lower feelings, but of friendships from which they may be said to be entirely banished, and of love which transfigures and survives them. Be it in the rapturous idealism of the *Divina Commedia*, or in the homely pathos of that most exquisite of Scotch ballads, 'John Anderson, my jo, John', with its picture of the old man and the old wife tottering down the hill, side by side, all that is noblest in literature bears witness to this; and if it be true, as has been sometimes said, that our disappointments are the measure of our greatness, how divine must be the capacities, how far-reaching the destiny, of beings who expect so much from one another, and whose mortification vents itself in such language as the poet has found for Andrea del Sarto here, when those anticipations are thwarted and worse than unfulfilled?

We may compare Pascal (*Pensées*, I. iv. 3, p. 48): 'Ainsi toutes ces misères prouvent sa grandeur, ce sont misères d'un grand seigneur, misères d'un roi dépossédé'—and a kindred passage in *Paracelsus*.

When we consider the two schools of what may be roughly called idealist and realistic art, we find ourselves in presence of a third characteristic of human nature, affecting rather the spectator than the artist. Is not the fact that unfinished and suggestive work is as attractive as it is, one instance of a very great and universal law that the human mind never likes to be quite passive? It is perfectly true that the highest masterpieces of all combine suggestiveness with finish. The 'Melancholia' of Albert Dürer is as finished as it can be, but one may look at

it for some time before one enters into all it has to suggest. Virgil is exquisitely finished, yet one may read a passage ten times over without exhausting all its felicities. But the same kind of activity of mind which leads the critic to hunt anew and anew for fresh meanings in the works of these supreme artists, often delights in dwelling on what has been, or what might have been, in things that are either incomplete, imperfectly attempted, or partially destroyed. This is why so many people have found pleasure and interest in trying to invent a conclusion for *Edwin Drood*. This also is why an old minster like Lincoln, with all its odd architectural quaintnesses and varieties which give the antiquary so much to think of, is infinitely more delightful than the beautiful little gem of a cathedral which has been erected at Edinburgh, where everything is exactly as it ought to be. It is why a ruin attracts us so much more than a building in perfect preservation. I have wondered sometimes what would have become of our two great universities, to say nothing of those of Scotland and Germany, if an absolutely perfect copy of each of the great classical works could have come down to us from the days of its author. They would be like the sportsman in *Punch* who had the fox presented to him ready stuffed.

The other day I was in a hospital and heard the lady nurse exclaim, 'There 's the broken patella in the garden ! ' It sounded like a new botanical name, but it turned out to be a man whose kneecap bone had been ingeniously mended with silver wire ; and, as she told me with great pride, it was the seventh case in all England that had been so treated. What would

she have cared for you or me who have the happiness to be sound in this particular respect ?

Much in this condition is the spectator who looks at a picture where all is done for him. He feels he is being treated like a child. What we want in everything is not only to be and to suffer (using the word in its widest sense), but also to do. Consequently we are not made happy by dramatic revivals where every chair is just what Sheridan might have sat upon himself, nor by photographs which remind us of all we would gladly forget, and cannot give us aught we would willingly remember, nor by novels that reproduce for us the wearisome banalities, the trite and commonplace details, of our own lives, nor by books on sacred subjects that attempt to promote our spiritual edification by minute and indiscriminate details of biblical life, nor by the petty gossip of society papers about live public characters, nor in fact by anything that leaves no room for the play of the imagination, whether in art or literature. We laugh at the relic hunting of the Middle Ages, but is not the materialism which prompted it alive and active at this hour, though in a somewhat different sphere ?

The worst of it is that an organ that ceases to be exercised gradually shrivels up, and it is to be feared some of us will find themselves with merely rudimentary wings because they have left off trying to fly.

But it is not merely the artist who acts upon society, but society that acts upon the artist. The Madonna-manufacture can never go on unless there be a market for manufactured Madonnas. It was the public taste of the day that contributed, we may

believe, to keep Andrea del Sarto at his low level. It is we, the English public, who are to a great extent responsible for the degradation of our modern Andreas, as any visit to the Royal Academy will show. We see the vulgarity, the staginess, the sensuousness, the pettiness of much of our own generation reflected on the canvases around us, just as we see in the works of Reynolds a mirror of the graceful, polished, unenthusiastic, but amiable life of a world which was soon to be thrilled by the Evangelical revival and terrified by the earthquake of the French revolution.

But I must not protract this essay unduly and will hasten to my final remark.

There is great insight into human nature in those lines which Mr. Browning puts into Andrea's mouth :

> Love, we are in God's hands.
> How strange, now, looks the life He makes us lead!
> So free we seem, so fettered fast we are.
> I feel He laid the fetter; let it lie.

This is a not unusual form of what may be called spiritual hypochondria. In the literal disease it is common enough to find patients who fancy themselves under special and mysterious restrictions or obligations, who go through some singular pantomimic performances, as Dr. Johnson seems to have done in obedience to this strange hallucination, who believe themselves to be incapable of moving a limb, of eating, or of making some other ordinary effort; who are in fact, in their own imagination, fettered and in captivity, or even subject to some ludicrous metamorphosis.

In the moral world this disease is equally common.

People yield to their own weaknesses, muddle and blunder away their lives, and then boast of resignation to the will of a higher Power. There is no more common excuse for laziness than this kind of fatalism.

Many of us will remember how, at the very entrance of Purgatory, Dante has painted for us a group of people lounging negligently in the shadow of the rock, and among them the figure of Belacqua, sitting and hugging his knees as if in weariness, with his face buried between them (*Purg.* iv). 'O dear master,' said Dante to Virgil, 'do look at this man who seems more negligent than if he were own brother to indolence ("che se pigrizia fosse sua sirocchia"). Then he turned and noticed us, moving his face upwards along his thigh, and said, "Do thou go up who art able".'

> Allor si volse a noi, e pose mente,
> Movendo 'l viso pur su per la coscia,
> E disse: 'Va su tu, che se' valente.'

The impossibility of making progress till the expiration of a given period (equal to that time which he had wasted on earth), which was laid as a punishment on Belacqua, seems to have already begun in this present life for people of the type which Mr. Browning has described with such pathetic power of realization; they prefer sitting with dejected heads and listless hands in their self-chosen gloom (giving to sheer remissness the name of submission, and forgetting that it is part of the highest Will that man should exercise his own), to imitating the hopeful spirit who is described by the 'homelier Dante of

our English prose' as finding in his own bosom the key which was to unlock every one of the wards in Doubting Castle, and thus passing from gloom to sunshine, and from despair to happiness and freedom. If it were on no other grounds but these we should be grateful to Mr. Browning for this, one of the most beautiful, the most thoughtful, the most finished, and, we may add, the most instructive of his poems. But we thank him also for having added to our mental stores an exquisite picture which, melancholy as it is, and haunting in its melancholy, carries with it the poignant charm of minor music, of autumn days, of bells heard in November evenings, of all that mortality has of keenest touch, of all that lies closest to the source of tears.

JOHN RUSKIN[1]

I FELT I was doing a somewhat rash action when I undertook to read a paper on Ruskin, but I have been made more aware of the extent of my own rashness when I have attempted to pursue the subject since, and a glance at the list of John Ruskin's works published by Messrs. Allen—not one-fifth part of which I can pretend to have read—makes me feel as if I had been not only rash, but audacious.

I can plead nothing on the other side but great personal enthusiasm for the man and his work, and the conviction that whatever I know or think

[1] Address originally given to the Teachers' Guild, Oxford, May 18, 1900.

worthily about art is mainly due to his influence and his writings, so that this paper, if it be nothing else, will be a humble tribute of gratitude to the revered teacher of one's youth.

I do not propose to give either a biography or a bibliography of Ruskin, but to try to sketch, however superficially, the leading outlines of his thought and teaching, and to appreciate, so far as in me lies, the special importance and significance of his career.

Ruskin's account of his own up-bringing as a child shows very clearly the two great influences which moulded his life: a lofty—one might say an austere—moral standard, and a love of the beautiful in art. There was a sort of Puritanical strictness, especially in his mother's character (so severe, that she actually covered up the beautiful pictures in the house on Sunday), which left an abiding impression on his nature long after he had emancipated himself from the narrow restrictions of childhood. Her practice of constant, reiterated reading of the Bible with him not only had a directly elevating moral effect, but doubtless tended to enrich his English style, and ennoble and spiritualize his habits of thought. Side by side with this was his father's love of art, which his ample fortune enabled him to indulge; as well as the privilege of travelling on the Continent in that leisurely old-fashioned way which we moderns have almost ceased to enjoy, in days before monster hotels, railways, and personally conducted tours.

Throughout Ruskin's life we find this antithesis of the Good and the Beautiful, and his desire, not so much perhaps to reconcile them, as to find out the common ground which existed between them.

The second twenty years of the nineteenth century, the time when Ruskin's mind was maturing, were coloured by the influence of Scott and Wordsworth and their contemporaries. Scott did more than any man of his generation to found the romantic school, the school whose ideal was that of Christian chivalry, which we see in such poems as *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, and *The Lord of the Isles*, as well as in *Ivanhoe*, *The Talisman*, and other of his prose works. In 1824 political reasons drove to England Gabriele Rossetti, whose family name has been indissolubly associated with that of Dante, and whose children were to be even more distinguished than himself. The study of Dante gradually became, if not fashionable, yet not unusual, and a work like Hallam's *Middle Ages* shows how public attention was gradually turning towards Italy. The dawn of Pre-Raphaelitism was not far off, though it could hardly be said to have begun.

Here, then, is one set of influences which, as Ruskin grew up, were brought to bear upon him—the return to what may be very roughly indeed be called the Middle Ages—the ages of manly honour, of womanly purity, of definite religious faith, of joyous, simple-hearted love of nature, of strong moral convictions, and of earnest, inflexible purpose.

Ruskin's little book *The Bible of Amiens*, giving a lovingly minute description of that beautiful cathedral, is one instance out of many among his works of his enthusiasm for the Middle Ages. My own earliest recollection of him is (I think it must have been about 1856) hearing him deliver a lecture on Illuminating and Mediaeval Art at the Workman's

Club, or an Architectural Museum, I am not sure which, in London; and his reading Longfellow's delightful lines in the *Golden Legend*, about Fra Pacifico at work illuminating—the lines which end (speaking of a bird)

> I'll sketch her in some quiet nook
> In the margin of my Gospel book.

Another potent influence in the life of Ruskin was that of Wordsworth, whose view of nature, representing as it did a great advance upon, and expansion of, those of the mediaeval world, and penetrated as it was by philosophic ideas, was affecting the minds of all earnest men of that generation, by the fearlessness of its appeal to first principles, its unconventionality, its insight, its deep reverence, and its moral purity. Nor must we forget Ruskin's Oxford life, bringing him, as it could not fail to do, into closer contact with great classical poets and thinkers, with Homer, and most of all with Plato, whose influence may be constantly traced in Ruskin's writings, and whose reflections in his *Republic* on the relation between art and morals, are among the most suggestive portions of his works.

Mention must also be made of Thomas Carlyle, whose love of truth and hatred of shams was as strong as Ruskin's own, and whose earnest unconventional habits of thought and quaint originality of style were among the most stimulating influences of the generation just above our own.

So much for the world of ideas in which Ruskin moved. But what was the art of England in—let us say—the reign of George IV, or William IV?

Wilkie (died 1841) was perhaps its greatest name, the name of a true artist, but one of small education, of limited views, and with few of the higher imaginative qualities.

Sir Thomas Lawrence was the popular portrait-painter of the day, an artist spoilt by his own facility and popularity. The reputation of Raeburn, a far greater man (died 1823), was rather Scotch than English, and there were other minor names of more or less merit, but the time was somewhat of a dead level between the grand period of Reynolds, Romney, and Gainsborough, and the glorious days which were to follow (Turner was born 1775, died 1851).

Blake, a man of remarkable genius, lived and died in obscurity. His friend Flaxman's sculptures were the property of the privileged classes. His exquisite Wedgwood designs, and Wedgwood's work generally, were among the few really graceful productions of English art in the days of our great-grandfathers.

The hideousness of the furniture, and much of the plate and jewellery, carpets and wall-papers, of the late pre-Victorian period can easily be imagined or recalled by any one who has ever stayed in an old-fashioned country house. The pavilion at Brighton, so much favoured by George IV, is the very acme of tastelessness—as that hideous blue, known as Waterloo blue, is perhaps the very ugliest and most unbecoming colour that any Englishwoman ever put on her person. But I do not think our ancestresses colour perceptions were ever very delicate—at least in the generation above one's own. At this moment, how was it that the son of a hairdresser near Covent

Garden,[1] brought up amid singularly ugly and narrow surroundings, should slowly but surely have matured and developed a genius for landscape painting of the very highest order, should have, in a series of magnificent works, growing richer and more astoundingly beautiful year by year, proved himself a master of the art of composition, a true poet on canvas, a colourist such as the world has rarely seen, and as a master of the effects of light, cloud, and water perhaps unrivalled in his art. This greatest of English painters was the guiding star of Ruskin's life. To preach the gospel of Turner to the world was the task which he set himself in *Modern Painters*. He was one of the few to recognize Turner's merits at a date when the world had hardly begun to realize them.[2] Sir Joshua Reynolds in his Academy Lectures had said that the last name he wished to pronounce within those walls was that of Michael Angelo. For that great name Ruskin would perhaps have substituted Joseph Mallord Turner. Let us hear what he says himself.

After speaking of Claude, Poussin, Cuyp, Vandevelde and the English school, Ruskin continues:

'The dead schools of landscape composed of the works we have been just examining are to be considered merely as a struggle of expiring skill to discover some new direction in which to display itself.

'There was no love of Nature in the age, only a desire for something new. Therefore those schools expired at last, leaving a chasm of nearly utter emptiness between them and the true moderns; out of which chasm the new school rises, not engrafted on that old one,

[1] Turner was born five years later than Wordsworth.

[2] He tells us himself he began copying Turner at 14 (see *Life of Dean Liddell*).

but from the very base of all things, beginning with mere washes of Indian ink, touched upon with yellow and brown, and gradually feeling its way to colour. But this infant school differed inherently from that ancienter one, in that its motive was love, . . . and therefore having this germ of true life, it grew and throve. Robson did not paint purple hills because he wanted to show how he could lay on purple, but because he truly loved their dark peaks. (Copley) Fielding did not paint downs to show how dexterously he could sponge out mists, but because he loved downs' (*Mod. P.* iii. 345).

Let us pause a little while on the word 'love'. Perhaps it is the golden key which will unlock our perplexities as to the relation between art and morals. If you love a thing you must love its real true self. Now Art may be defined as pre-eminently a work of *love*. Why do poets sing, and painters paint? The true poet, the true painter, does so because he loves what he represents. No one can doubt that Homer loved heroic warfare, or simple natural beauty, or human life, and sang of it because he loved it. No one can doubt that Shakspere loved that great, stirring, many-sided world of man and of nature which he has immortalized. No one can doubt that the sculptor of the Elgin Marbles felt the purest joy in depicting the flexible young limbs of the men and women, the spirited forms of the horses, in the Panathenaic procession. No one can doubt that Turner loved with an almost devouring passion the glorious natural beauty which lives on his canvas and on his too-perishable paper. Now, when any one loves a thing or a person, he seizes its character, he penetrates its inner life. The work of a great artist is true, because it is loving; it is true, but it is not slavishly photographic. A camera has no emotions or affections; the pattern of a flounce, the carving of a footstool, is

as dear to it as the face of the sitter. A poet can give us more of the inner life of what he loves in a line and a half, than an uninspired, unloving writer could give in a lengthy catalogue. It is this power of seizing the 'inward and spiritual grace' of any object which is the special prerogative of genius; yet sometimes people of no genius at all have, through the guiding instinct of love, a wonderful, a pathetic intuition, and sometimes an humorous truthfulness of expression. We may compare the following passage from *Modern Painters*, iii. 266:

'In the old (mediaeval) landscapes, no one ever thought of drawing anything but as well as he could . . . and always *distinctly*. Leaf, or stone, or animal, or man, it was equally drawn with care and clearness, and its essential characters shown. If it was an oak-tree, the acorns were drawn; if a flint pebble, its veins were drawn; if an arm of the sea, its fish were drawn; if a group of figures, their faces and dresses were drawn—to the very last subtlety of expression and end of thread that could be got into the space, far off or near. But now . . . you examine your closest foreground and find no leaves; your largest oak, and find no acorns; your human figure, and find a red spot of paint instead of a face; and in all this again and again the Aristophanic words come true, and the clouds seem to be "great goddesses to idle men".'

Now when you love a thing or person very much, you not only take note of it when it is before your eyes, but it is ever-present with you; and in this manner you disengage its essential qualities from its accidents, and by degrees you get the habit of rapidly discerning what those essential qualities are. The man of genius differs from the rest of his kind in the rapidity of insight with which he seizes those essentials. If Turner had only ten minutes to make a sketch he would put on paper the really important things; while

a commonplace man would be only doing the balustrades in the foreground of the picture. Here, then, we have at once a point of contact between art and morality, the spirit of love and the consequent spirit of truthfulness[1]—and I may add a third quality which may be called highmindedness, that fineness of nature which is the very opposite of meanness, and the certain concomitant of greatness, whether in morals or in art. I must refer you to the works of Ruskin to show how these ideas are expanded and illustrated. We must not, however, look on Ruskin as a kind of modern Plato who held theories about art, but so far as we know never touched a brush or a chisel. Ruskin's art was of a very practical kind. Beautiful specimens of his handiwork still exist, both in the collection in the Ashmolean at Oxford, which he has so generously enriched, and also in some of the plates which illustrate his works, which for accuracy, for delicacy, for poetical feeling, are far beyond the usual standard of an amateur. (There was I believe a time in which he had intended to make architecture his profession, and his great work on the *Stones of Venice* shows how he was imbued with the spirit of the best mediaeval builders.) But Ruskin could never have been a mere draughtsman. He was too much of a thinker for that. If he drew rocks he began to think why one rock was unlike another, of what substances the rocks were composed, and what forces had been at work upon them. If he drew trees, the trees seemed to become to him almost like living beings with individual characters. If he drew clouds, or torrents, or lakes, he studied their various forms

[1] See note, *Mod. P.* iii. 33.

and movements with the eye of a naturalist and a poet. A group of leaves plucked by the wayside, a bunch of flowers, or even a tuft of grass, illustrated for him one or other of those many laws of nature which will be found in his works under such titles as 'The Law of Deflection', 'The Law of Succession', 'The Law of Resilience', &c. Whatever department of art Ruskin touched he brought to it the same spirit of inquiry, the same intelligent, searching, patient love of truthfulness, the same hatred of pretence. He may have been sometimes fanciful, sometimes intolerant, sometimes partial, but he was a mighty witness to the truth which is constantly forgotten by shallow, second-hand, superficial minds, that great imaginative power can only subsist where the mind has a clear, thorough, and far-reaching perception of reality. Of this truth Dante and Shakspere, though far as the poles asunder in some ways, are our most conspicuous examples as poets; but as a critic, few can have equalled Ruskin in this respect.

As Ruskin advanced in years, he became more catholic in his tastes; and I may instance his pleasure in black-and-white work, especially some of the drawings in *Punch*. One of the last lectures he gave as Slade Professor in Oxford was illustrated by a large copy of two heads—Mrs. Ponsonby de Tomkyns and Lady Gorgius Midas—where the former assures the latter, who is giving a party, that she will 'throw over the Botherby Jones, and come herself'. The elegance of her gracefully-carried head won great praise from Ruskin.

He maintained, however, that in all comic work, all humorous work, over-elaboration is a mistake.

To give an extreme instance : we all feel that Lear's nonsense verses, such as,

> There was an old lady of Harrow,
> And she went to church in a barrow,

would be ruined if a careful study of a woman wheeled to church in a barrow, with a background of pointed arches, were substituted for the half a dozen vigorous dashes which we now enjoy. Work of this kind ought not to be over-weighted. It is like writing a commentary on a pun, or fingering a bow of ribbon till it loses all its freshness. In the illustrations to some recent fairy tales, the same kind of clumsy realism obtruding itself into the domain of the fantastic is even more offensive. Compare them with those to the *Rose and the Ring*, and you will feel that you would give a bushel of the former for that one scribble of King Valoroso knocked down by Betsinda with the warming-pan!

When speaking of black-and-white work, mention ought to be made of Ruskin's great and enthusiastic admiration, in his later years, of Miss Alexander's beautiful Italian drawings, which were completely after his own heart. In June 1883 he gave a lecture in a private house (Mrs. Bishop's in Kensington) on her work, and that of Kate Greenaway, which delighted those who were privileged to hear it (*Life*, 370). But we must turn from this too-tempting digression.

I have said that the two leading characteristics in Ruskin's life were his love of beauty and his severe morality, which made him not only an art-critic but a philanthropist. He was not content to enjoy the

metaphorical purple and fine linen of beautiful external surroundings, nor to fare sumptuously every day on the intellectual delights of literature and congenial society. No, he was haunted all his life by the needs of the poor—and the worse than poor, the stunted, stinted inhabitants of our streets and courts, and all the crowds of men, women, and children who are sacrificed to our so-called civilization. Hear what he says himself! In writing to a friend he describes a visit to a woman dying in the utmost poverty; and adds,

'The sight of this, and my own shameful comforts, three wax candles and blazing fire and dry roof . . . ! Oh me, Susie, what is to become of me in the next world, who have in this life all my good things?' (*Life and Work of John Ruskin*, p. 290).

In one of his lectures, delivered in Oxford, he says:

'And therefore these are the things that I have first and last to tell you in this place:—that the fine arts are not to be learned by Locomotion, but by making the homes we live in lovely, and by staying in them;—that the fine arts are not to be learned by Competition, but by doing our quiet best in our own way;—that the fine arts are not to be learned by Exhibition, but by doing what is right, and making what is honest, whether it is exhibited or not;—and, for the sum of all, that men must paint and build neither for pride nor for money, but for love; for love of their art, for love of their neighbour, and whatever better love may be than these, founded on these.'[1]

It seems difficult to add anything to these burning words, except to say that Ruskin lived up to his own standard. He was the most generous of men. Inheriting from his father a magnificent fortune of

[1] Lect. IV, p. 115.

£200,000, he died only worth £10,000. Of his munificence to Oxford, where he acted as Slade Professor of Fine Art from 1869 onwards, where the fascination of his lectures is still unforgotten, a noble memorial exists in the Ruskin School, where there are cases full of the most exquisite watercolours and sketches. His friendship with Sir Henry Acland and Dean Liddell, both of them accomplished artists, dated from old Christ Church days and was never interrupted. The New Museum is a beautiful monument of the influence of the taste and culture of which Ruskin was the apostle. At one time of his life he threw himself warmly and generously into the work of Miss Octavia Hill, in the poorest districts of London; at another he strove zealously to stimulate the industrial life of the cottage homes of Westmorland.

How far Ruskin's economic views were capable of practical realization it is very difficult to say. In 1860 four articles from his pen, entitled 'Unto this Last', appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, but the series had to be discontinued on account of the public indignation they excited. In some ways the author was in advance of his age; and one cannot wonder that the opinions then prevalent found small favour in his eyes. But though full of brilliant, suggestive passages, these utterances, and others to be found in his writings, can hardly be considered logical or likely to lead to any immediate practical result. Perhaps the truth would be that he was rather meant by nature to inspire other men with ideals than to carry out those ideals himself. But it cannot be questioned that many of the noblest practical workers in economic and industrial fields have, consciously or

unconsciously, been affected by his influence. It has penetrated the atmosphere we breathe, it has given us aspirations which we cannot smother, it has called to us with a voice which we cannot neglect. A great man is always the leader, not the follower, of his age; and it is possible that, a century hence, the spirit of Ruskin, if it revisits this earth whose beauty he loved so well, and whose sorrows he pitied so deeply, may find that after all his words have not been spoken in vain.

On the day of his death, as I was told by one who had good reason to know,[1] he was lying gazing first on the beautiful pictures which adorned his room, and then at the window which presented little but a blank, the hills being veiled in mist. So he lay very quietly for some time, till just before sunset one of those lovely low gleams of light which often make up for the dreariness of a damp grey day, shone out, and once more the familiar hill outlines were revealed, and to the friend who was sitting watching beside him it seemed as if the dying man's last glimpse of earthly beauty were as it were the opening of the gate of heaven.

Ruskin's life had its clouds, some of them very dark ones, its gloomy seasons of trial, its periods of deep mental depression. All that is over now, and we love to think of that noble but too sensitive nature at rest from all personal sorrow, and all the fret and care and anxiety of life, in the presence of One whose dwelling is the light of setting suns. He has left us a great inheritance; his life and writings were a precious gift to the world, and like all gifts

[1] Mrs. Furneaux, *née* Severn.

bring to those who receive them their own responsibility. We cannot behold a vision and be as if we had not seen it, we cannot hear a call and be as if we had not heard it. We cannot cultivate beauty, whether in art or nature, merely for our own personal enjoyment. The nemesis of satiety and disappointment, and in the end corruption and debasement, of art itself is sure to follow if we do. Old John Bunyan's words are as true for the amateur and the dilettante as they are for the miser and the money-getter,

> There was a man, though some did count him mad,
> The more he cast away, the more he had,

and there is no wealth like the possession of a generous, unselfish spirit. It is for the warmth of his heart and nobility of his character, far more than for his aesthetic and intellectual gifts, that we love as well as honour the name of John Ruskin.

A VENTURE OF FAITH[1]

IT seems impossible to write on any subject this month but that of the great event whose 400th anniversary is being celebrated this year (1892). The month of October, four hundred years ago, was the month in which what, for practical purposes, may be called America was discovered. Think of the suspense of those ten days early in the October of 1492—

[1] First published in the *Monthly Packet* for that date.

those last days of mutiny and ill-feeling, when it required all Columbus's power over himself and over others not to turn back from the all but accomplished quest! Think how low his hope had sunk, how weary and depressed his spirits must have been, during that last night or two of anxious watching! It may be doubted if there be anywhere in the whole of history a more remarkable instance of the importance sometimes assumed by trifles, than the part played in the narrative by that carved staff which came floating towards the disheartened Spaniards on the hitherto untraversed waters; those birds whose presence seemed to betoken land; or by that wandering spark of fire which was the first absolutely certain indication of the nearness of human inhabitants, and greeted the Admiral as he sat watching on the night of Thursday, October 11th, 1492, on his high station on the poop. How affecting is the whole narrative! The singing of the *Salve Regina*,[1] the vesper hymn used nightly on the Admiral's ship; the stirring and encouraging address given by him to his men before they retired to rest; and then this lonely watch of his, and the unutterable feelings of that moment when he first beheld the light; his calling to Pedro Gutierrez, and then to Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, to make sure his eyes were not deceiving him; the

[1] Readers of Dante will think of the 7th canto of the *Purgatorio*, where, at the decline of day,

> *Salve Regina* in sul verde e in sui fiori
> Quivi seder cantando anime vidi.

The picture of that secluded, flowery, and fragrant vale may have been familiar to the mind of Dante's great fellow-countryman, who had a highly poetical vein and the keenest sense of natural beauty, as his descriptions of the Indies' show.

fitful coming and going of the light as if borne in the hand of some fisherman or pedestrian; and at last, at two in the morning, the gun from the *Pinta*, giving the joyful signal of land! It is difficult to keep the tears out of one's eyes when reading such a narrative.

We cannot, however often we may have heard the story, help thrilling all over at the contrast between the careless indifference with which that spark was kindled and carried about, and the momentous effect it, and other tokens equally slight, had in stimulating the fast sinking spirits on board those crazy caravels. Who knows, had it not been for trifles like these, whether Columbus would ever have been able to induce his men to hold on for those few additional hours on which the fate of unborn generations may be said to have depended?

Much is being written just now about the life and character of Columbus. It is a life full of dramatic situations, from the touching story of his visit to the convent of La Rabida, with his tired and hungry child, whom Fray Juan Perez so hospitably cared for (a visit which may possibly have led eventually to the introduction of Columbus to the Court of Spain), to the still more affecting close of the great navigator's life, when, after having given a new world to Castile and Leon, he found himself in his old age homeless in his adopted country, and saying,[1] 'At the present moment, after twenty years of service, I do not own a roof in Spain. If I desire to eat or sleep, I have no resort but an inn, and for the most times have not wherewithal to pay my bill.'

But, alas! like many other human lives, it is not

[1] In a letter to his son Diego, about two years before his death.

rounded off with any dramatic poetical justice. After the brilliant climax of the discovery of America comes a long, dreary, dragging narrative of disappointment, injustice, and vexation. Columbus and Isabella are noble characters, but nothing can be more ignoble than the greed and cruelty and discord which showed themselves among the early Spanish settlers; the incredible insolence of Bobadilla; the cruel and sanguinary misgovernment of Ovando; and last, but not least, the cold ingratitude of King Ferdinand. Columbus dies at last, broken down and almost broken-hearted. He has had two ideals before him: one has partially been realized; the 'Indies' have been found, though a long way off from Prester John; but the realization has been almost sadder than disappointment would have been. The serpent has soon shown himself in that delicious Eden of primal naked innocence; blood has been shed in the strife for gold; so-called Christianity has approved itself most unchristian; baptism has become with a bitter irony only a form of tyrannical bigotry; and the sacred and tender associations of the Cross have lent themselves to cruelties which the 'Holy Saviour', after whom Columbus beautifully named his first-discovered island, would have rebuked with all the sternness which outraged love can display.

But Columbus had another unrealized ideal which was constantly present to his mind, and remembered in his last will and testament—the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre. In the interval between his third and fourth voyage he prepared an elaborate manuscript, in which he set forth the passages in Holy Scripture and the Fathers which, as he considered,

bore on the discovery of the New World, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre, and sent them to the king and queen, with an autograph letter, urging them to set on foot a crusade, and speaking of his own magnificent discoveries rather as credentials and signs than as things of any moment in themselves.

Standing on the threshold of the New World, he is still wistfully looking back to the Old. Strange that a man who holds for us the keys of the portals through which Europe is to pass to the wide regions of the west, he who is the father of that great modern life which is summed up in the word 'America', should still gaze with a longing, lingering look on a few feet of ground in a small sea-board territory known as 'the Holy Land'!

The deep piety of Columbus is conspicuous throughout his life. His realization of the personality of Jesus Christ is very characteristic,[1] and no less so is his imitation in his own personality (a remarkable mingling of great insight, great tenacity and power of endurance, with immense and dignified patience) of One who, in a still higher sense, has given a New World to us. There was no commonplace greed of territory in the mind of Columbus. He seems to have felt with singular keenness that a very small portion of the world, hallowed by sacred memories and associations, may be of more true worth than

[1] 'Iesus cum Maria sit nobis in via' was, according to his son Fernando, Columbus's usual way of beginning a letter or other document (we may compare Bishop Ken's 'All glory be to God'), and the mystic letters which he wrote above his name (spelt XPO FERENS) are explained to have a religious meaning. The very spelling of the name itself shows that he did not forget its etymology and beautiful import, so appropriate to the spirit of his own life.

many léagues of the earth's surface, which are, as yet, a blank to the heart, the intellect, and the imagination.

But if one of his wishes had been fulfilled in a way that seemed to mock him even in its very accomplishment, the other was not destined to be realized at all. The Holy Sepulchre was still to remain in the hands of the infidel.

What, then, are we to say of the life of Columbus? Was it a failure? Surely not. Perhaps it *would* have been a failure if things had all gone according to his wishes. He was like Abraham—one who was not allowed to possess the very territory he had set his foot on. Such is God's method of dealing with His best and noblest.

We may place ourselves in imagination at the side of Columbus, perhaps in prison, perhaps in those hours of merely nominal freedom, when, helpless, and tormented by the illness which constant exposure had brought on him, he lay on his sick-bed. What thoughts that man must have had! Did he, we wonder, regret his life, or think it wasted? Did he murmur, as he lay there in his loneliness? Lonely, yet with his brain thronged with visionary scenes of his eventful life—now, in memory, craving for an audience of kings and great men; now watching anxiously, amid the scoffs and sneers of his companions, for that first dim hint of land; now in his hour of triumph almost adored by the very men who had insulted him; now returning to Spain and enthusiastically welcomed; and then again betrayed, rebelled against, actually put into fetters, and finding himself quite unable to prevent cruelties and injustices which his soul abhorred!

'Ah!' such a man might say, 'it has not been in vain, either the joy or the sorrow of my life. I have learnt that one has need of higher aspirations than even those of mine. I thought they were noble, but God has taught me that there are aspirations nobler still. I have a longer voyage to make ready for, and richer realms to visit. I must no longer think of the sepulchre of a dead Christ, but of the living presence of One who died and rose again. In Him I must not lose my faith and my hope; that faith and hope which stood by me when all else forsook me.' There was a touching appropriateness in his death on Ascension Day, 1506, with the words, *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*, on his lips. 'For now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly,' might well have been inscribed upon his tomb.

But it was not entirely on these comparatively obvious reflections that it has been my wish to dwell on the present occasion. Other deductions may be made from the history which are perhaps likely to be no less helpful to us, especially to characters of a particular class, and one tolerably numerous in our own day. We may think of the discovery of America as the greatest instance secular history affords of a venture of faith. We cannot fail to be struck with its bearing on the whole question of faith—a question never more urgent than at present.

It is very difficult for some of us to bridge over the gulf between intellectual conviction and that warm, vivid, enthusiastic realization of what we believe, which is the joy of some happy and devout souls among us. There are many, we may be sure, who are quite willing to acknowledge the validity of

the ordinary arguments in favour of the Christian religion, yet on whom those arguments seem to make no more practical impression than a successfully demonstrated problem in Euclid would do. The thing may be all very true, but somehow or other it does not touch them. Now, we have just seen there was a time when all those vast and rich and lovely territories in America existed, for the European world, merely in one man's brain, and as the result of severe intellectual labour. When we look at the arguments employed by Columbus to support his theory, we find they stood under three heads: 1. The nature of things (the earth being a globe, &c.). 2. The authority of learned writers. 3. The reports of navigators. It is, of course, easy to pick to pieces many of these arguments in detail, but he was right in his main conception, that if you sailed far enough to the west you must infallibly come to land. The discovery of America was the result of certain logical and mathematical conclusions, based no doubt on imperfect premises, but still due to careful study and calculation, and not the dream of a visionary or the fancy of a child. Columbus, with all his undoubted enthusiasm, was a practical man, a brain-worker, as well as one who, from boyhood, had toiled hard in seamanship. He used conscientiously all the materials within his reach; he worked the subject out mathematically according to the best lights he had.

Take a humbler instance of the same thing from everyday life. Every family has, or ought to have, a professor of 'Bradshaw'—a master of that black art of ciphers, lines, dots, and strange intercalations, which, rightly applied, tells us the means we must

employ if we are to enjoy, as many of us have lately done, our autumn holiday.

Do not some of us, when we return and unpack our goods, glance once more at the tattered yellow cover, and as the book falls open of itself at a much turned-down page, exclaim, pointing to some little seaside station, with its not very numerous trains, 'Ah! six weeks ago that was a mere name to me, a bare idea. Now the word is like a picture gallery.' Well, all those mountain views, those ocean sunsets, those delightful rambles, those shells, those wild-flowers, all those pleasures which you have lately realized, existed for you six weeks ago, let us say, as something depending on the mastery of a complex mechanical system, as expressed by a few badly-printed figures on a poor thin bit of paper. The whole thing existed, for you and your family, only in your brains. Your getting there depended on the working out of certain arithmetical formulae—those of pounds, shillings, and pence, as well as the 'Bradshaw' calculations aforesaid. You had to make, in a small way, a venture of faith. But how foolish it would have been not to have trusted those calculations, not to have believed that the dry processes of scientific reasoning offered at least a strong probability—strong enough to be acted upon—that he who chose to profit by them would gain delights attainable in no other way. Of course, in our case, the process is so familiar that there ceases to be anything wonderful about it; it is only when performed on a grand scale, where the risk is greater, the probability less assured, and, on the other hand, the results of success are infinitely more brilliant and widespread—as in the

case of Columbus—that our imagination is greatly affected by it.

But may not the history of Columbus be of some comfort to those among ourselves who are not wilfully irreligious, but who would give much to be able to feel, when engaged in their religious duties, anything like the sense of reality which they have when they are out shopping, or at their meals, or at their daily work? Do not the best of us sometimes feel as if religion were a tame, dull, and profitless pursuit, rather off the main thoroughfare of life? Do we not all feel, in a word, as if the taking of Granada were of much greater importance than the discovery of a new world? The taking of Granada! Nay, the song of the muleteer in the street; a drink of water when we are thirsty; a new plume of feathers for one's hat; a rosebud thrown from a window, or the issue of the next bull-fight.

These are the things that interested the little minds in Spain four hundred years ago. But it did not make the realities that Columbus wanted to get them to attend to a whit less real. Nor, in the present day, does the existence of the thousand and one little ephemeral interests, nor even such things as a general election, a big scientific discovery, or a continental war, make the realities which do not force themselves on us through our outward senses, or appeal to our comfort, our self-satisfaction, or our pockets, a whit less important. Because we have to think, and think hard (many of us have) before we can bring some of the great truths of religion before our minds; because they exist, as they did to men of the type of Bishop Butler, rather in the guise of

strong probability than of palpable certainty, is that any reason why we should treat them as unreal? Nor is this applicable only to religious belief, but to moral obligation. Justice, as well as Faith, often seems a very cold, dull, calculating figure. It is not given to every one to be ardent, imaginative, and emotional. It is not every one who has a 'Pisgah-sight of Palestine'.

To many of us our beliefs often appear cold intellectual assents, rather than fervent convictions. How can we help it? Even Columbus did not know what America was like till he got there.

But surely in making that magnificent discovery he did something more than add a new hemisphere to the 'world as known to the ancients'. He gave a profound and enduring emphasis to the great maxim, that we must walk by faith and not by sight; that we must live by ideas and not be dominated by our senses and the things immediately about us; and that there may—aye, that there will—come a time when things which now only exist for us as abstractions will assume their place in the world of our immediate consciousness, as surely as the lovely isles of the Bahamas were the realization of the painful thought and labour of one solitary student to whom the world for years refused to listen.

But is there, then, no place for enthusiasm? Are we all to be governed by logic and mathematics? Far from it. But some of us may not be gifted with enthusiasm, and the present appeal is to them. It is to ask them to borrow (may we not fairly ask them to do so?) some warmth from the ardour of others, as the crew of Columbus did from him. Here is

a man who is in possession of certain arguments which he imparts to you. You do not deny them, but they do not act on you as they do on him. Now, how far are you justified in being affected by his enthusiasm at second-hand? Certainly not at all where the argument is weak, but very much indeed where the argument is strong. The great men of the world have always walked on two feet—the foot of Reason and the foot of Enthusiasm. The little ones very often hop only on one leg. And there is a stage in human progress when the fervour of the enthusiast is as necessary as the logic of the thinker. Columbus combined both in a remarkable degree, and it is this that makes his character so important, and his life so exemplary. We want light and we want fire. For we may be quite sure of one thing, that we (some of us, at least) were intended to be enthusiastic, and therefore mankind was meant to have something to be enthusiastic about. Columbus himself found even the discovery of a new world insufficient to satisfy him. Now there are no more Americas to be discovered; is there any other direction whither we may turn our observation, and is there any light in the horizon to gladden our eyes and hearts? Perhaps we cannot all see it, but if some of us do, might not the rest take courage, and go on hoping, and using their rudder, oars, and sails a little longer?

OLD FINERY

THERE are few things which make one feel so sad as turning out a drawer of old finery. It befalls many of us to have to handle, at some time of our lives, the little personal possessions of our departed relatives or friends. The task cannot fail to make us murmur

Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt,

if not in Virgil's words, yet some sentiment equivalent to them, in our own. But there is a wide difference in the emotions we feel at the sight of some relics of the departed, as compared with others. Books, for instance, are not wholly melancholy in the thoughts they suggest. We take up a well-read volume of some great poet, we rejoice in seeing the pencil-marks of the hand once so dear to us, and we feel that the beautiful thought, the high aspiration is not dead, that it has gone to feed the immortal part of the reader's nature, that it is still living, with him or her. Something similar is the case with the familiar implements—the pen, the workbox, the tools, the painting materials which our friend has left behind. They represent the useful kindnesses of a life which are treasured in affectionate memory after the immediate need for them has ceased. The study chair, with the well-worn blotting-pad in front of it, where the bread-winner of the family used to sit, or even the sewing-machine where the mother's or sister's figure was visible day by day, busily shaping garments

for the household—these and such-like things have a dignity, almost a consecration, about them. We feel they have attained their end, have served their purpose, and that the unselfish generous character whose loss we bewail was ennobled and developed by their use. This is the case in a very marked degree with little things that remind us of our servants who are gone. In the present writer's experience, even an old tin watering-pot, or the well-rubbed key of a conservatory door, brings up the thought of a faithful gardener who was taken away by sudden death, in the very midst of his daily work. Things like these cease to be commonplace utensils when seen with the light of Death upon them—they become symbols of steadfast labour, of kindliness, of fidelity.

So again with old letters. They are sad, no doubt, but also very instructive. How strange it is to glance at a long correspondence which all turned on some hope or desire never to be realized—on some plan which was, perhaps, suddenly frustrated—the love-letters of the pair who never married, the schemes for preferment which were rudely crushed by a change of ministry, or the death of a patron—the elaborate counsels of some Lord Chesterfield, whose son turned out a very commonplace Mr. Stanhope after all. These have their morals—and no less so those beautiful letters which every family circle must cherish—letters quite unsuited for publication, but full of the unselfish kindness of one sweet nature, the affectionate thoughtfulness of another, the noble unworldliness of a third. A collection of a man's or woman's letters often shows us his or her character in the making. We trace this in many a biography which has seen the light, and no less

so in those unprinted and unprintable relics which, perhaps, sometimes we unwillingly commit to the flames, because we despair of making the next generation understand what manner of man or woman wrote them, and are unwilling they should be desecrated by unloving and indifferent hands.

But old finery! Who has a good word to say for it? What dismal feelings are awakened when we turn over the odds and ends of old artificial flowers, ribbons, beads, lace, and other furbelows, which in the case of women, at all events, form so large a portion of their hoards? Nature, wonderful in everything, is not least wonderful in this that she makes a complete clearance of her finery every autumn. Where are last year's rose-petals now? If not in our potpourri jars, they have mouldered into their kindred soils, and go to swell the growth of future roses. But their silken and muslin imitations still linger, it is to be feared, in many a bandbox, and some day or other will be disinterred with perhaps an ejaculation of pity or disgust amid other relics of bygone finery. Nor is it only our finery which grows old, but *we* grow old also! Many women must have read with sympathy the story of the French actress, who in her old age wished to try on once more a cap which, worn by her, had in former days aroused the enthusiasm of the public. She put it on, and looked at herself in the glass. 'Ah!' she exclaimed, in disappointment, 'c'est bien le bonnet, mais ce n'est plus la figure.'

No one, however, has known this feeling at its climax, unless he has inspected the waxworks at Westminster Abbey. There, in a seldom-visited Chapel, may be seen the (once) life-like effigies of

Queen Elizabeth, Charles II, and other monarchs and distinguished persons, infinitely more ghastly than death, arrayed in tattered silks and velvets, point lace and sham pearls—a truly gruesome exhibition!

The transition is very easy from actual old finery to many other things which have their day—a very short one—and then fall for ever into the limbo of the obsolete. Much the same feeling that is awakened by a box of faded old ribbons or a discoloured set of sham pearls is aroused by the fashionable novels which our grandmothers devoured two or three generations ago, and which now appear to us utterly vapid and tasteless. How well Charles Lamb has pointed this out when he contrasts such ephemera with a *great* literary work!

'We appeal', he says,[1] 'to any one that is acquainted with the common run of Lane's novels, as they existed some twenty or thirty years back—those scanty intellectual viands of the whole female reading public, till a happier genius arose, and expelled for ever the innutritious phantoms—whether he has not found his brain more "betossed", his memory more puzzled, his sense of when and where more confounded, among the improbable events, the incoherent incidents, the inconsistent characters, or no-characters, of some third-rate love intrigue—where the persons shall be a Lord Glendamour and a Miss Rivers, and the scene only alternate between Bath and Bond Street—a more bewildering dreaminess induced upon him than he has felt wandering over all the fairy grounds of Spenser.'

I know few more depressing kinds of reading than the publishers' advertisements at the end of a thirty or forty years' old book—the list of works that were the rage—So-and-so's Travels, some one else's Essays, Charles Honeyman's Sermons, Lady Fanny Flummery's novels—all dead now, dead and with no

[1] Lamb, *Sanity of True Genius*.

'Resurgam' on their hatchments! Yet the indifference we feel for these is outdone by the livelier disgust with which we turn over the would-be funny books of our ancestors—the sporting novel, the slangy novel, the caricature which has lost its laughter-compelling power, the verses with many italics, blanks, asterisks, and initials which we now cannot conceive how any one could have thought witty. Yet all this while Falstaff's fat sides seem as palpable, his jests as fresh as ever, while many even of Dickens's characters are losing their reality and their effect. It is easy to moralize on a display of this kind, easy to point out that we should discriminate between the ephemeral fashions of our own—or any other—day, and those realities which are not of an age but for all time; to say that nothing is so unfashionable and *démodé* as a belated fashion, nothing so vapid as the slang, whether sporting, fashionable, or artistic which has gone out of date. But is there anything to be said on the other side? Are the moralists to have it all their own way? There is a moment in the life of a bunch of artificial flowers, a pink ribbon, when it is very far from unimportant. It is not untrue to say, 'if Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the fate of the world would have been different'; and who knows how much of the making or marring of a social success, and of all that hinged upon it, has been due to the tasteful selection of a tint, the set of a bow, the cut of a skirt, or the arrangement of a ruffle? These things are not unimportant because they are ephemeral, and whatever moralists may say, the instinctive common sense of humanity goes on recognizing the fact. After all, the present moment *is* the present moment. Its reign

may be brief, but it is scarcely short of absolute. That expression 'up-to-date', which we so often hear and perhaps sometimes protest against, is the outcome of what most of us feel at the bottom of our hearts, that it is *now* that we have to live and act and play our parts in this little theatre of life.

> The present moment's all our own,
> The next we ne'er may see,

says the old song. Or, as Goethe's Mephistopheles puts it from his professorial chair:

> Doch der den Augenblick ergreift,
> Das ist der rechte Mann (*Faust*, i. 4).

'What', some one may reply, 'are we then to take for our motto, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die"?' Well, no, not exactly. But it is quite true that we cannot get on without eating and drinking. We cannot get on without doing the things of the moment *at* the moment. Thinking about next week or the week before last may be desirable and instructive, but, after all, here is to-day; and to deal with to-day we must sympathize with to-day, recognize its ways of thinking, its modes, its fashions—I do not say slavishly follow them.

It is quite true that Shakspere was not of an age but for all time, but it is also true that his dramas, notably the comic parts of them, are full of contemporary allusions, many of them, as in the case of Aristophanes, difficult to trace. There is a great deal of 'actuality' about both these inimitable writers. Probably they troubled themselves very little about immortality. Fancy Aristophanes ever giving a thought to the clumsily built and hideously attired young barbarians

who in a foggy unknown island were one day to 'get him up' for an Examination. All *he* cared for was for the applause of the spectators who filled the seats of the Dionysiac theatre, beneath the clear pellucid Athenian sky.

Both he and Shakspere would, we think, have been a good deal depressed could they have known what an elaborate amount of explanation some of their best jokes would have required after the lapse of centuries. We all feel the very essence of a 'jest's prosperity' is that it should go off lightly, with a feathery touch. A lumbering, dragging jest is no jest at all, and I fear we must own that though the great tragic side of Shakspere is as fresh for us now as the day it was written (notwithstanding the immortal Falstaff, who is a real *character*—not a caricature), yet the comic parts are apt to drag. The actors work hard, but the audience does not rise to the fun as it does to that of some trashy contemporary farce. The Grave-digger in *Hamlet* is not a purely comic character.

We cannot deny that there is great power in 'actuality', in being of one's age, and speaking *to* one's age, in the language of one's age. But we must make our peace with the moralists. Our age not only acts on us, but we act on our age. Even in our lightest, most frivolous moments it is not all 'take' for us and no 'give'. We adopt a fashion, we also modify it. There is a kind of unspoken consensus of good taste which is always bringing itself to bear on the things of the moment. For instance in the utmost 'abandon' of fun and playfulness no one would be tolerated who made some of the coarse jests which deface the humorous passages in Shakspere, and still more

regrettably, of course, in Aristophanes. In the same way—nowadays, there is slang—and slang! Few things offer a surer test of delicate perception than that fine discrimination of the borderland between slang which is piquant and slang which is offensive. Never to use a slang expression, however appropriate and picturesque, is, methinks, to be out of sympathy with one's age. To interlard one's whole conversation with slang is like feeding one's friends on dishes seasoned with garlic instead of that delicate touch of flavour when

> Onion atoms lurk within the bowl
> And, scarce suspected, animate the whole.

So with dress—to return to the 'old finery' from whence we started. We all help to make fashions as well as to popularize them. No one is quite passive—as is said to be the case in table-turning, even when the hands appear immovable, the table does go round—and there is no trifle so trivial which its owner's personality does not modify.

There has been a time when the bit of finery now so faded and melancholy really played a part in the gaiety of some delightful moment, some brilliant reunion, some lover's meeting. It caught the light, it glowed in the warmth, it swayed and moved, animated by the vitality of its wearer, it seemed part of her very self. Why should we lament over it? it did what it had to do, it added to human happiness (unless worn by a very tasteless person) once upon a time. Why regret the bright hours of which it seems the embodiment? As well regret the summer sunshine which has ripened the harvests and the grapes. Happy hours do not end when the clock strikes twelve, and

Cinderella has to hurry home. They are the sunshine of existence, they help to make a character genial and kindly and generous, to ripen and sweeten life. Despite all that Dante has said about 'il ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria', we venture to differ from him. If happy hours have been selfishly spent they are of course painful to remember, but it is not the happiness, *as such*, that makes them so. Which is likely to be kindest and most generous to his fellow-creatures, the workhouse boy who never gets any treats, or the child who *has* enjoyments? Let Oliver Twist reply. Human nature is not as good as it ought to be but neither is it hopelessly depraved; it is still capable of grateful and generous impulses, still glad to share its good things with others; being happy, on the whole, sweetens it, and being miserable is very apt to turn it sour. And before we consign our bundles of old finery to the flames, where they will take leave of life gaily in a brilliant blaze, let us be thankful for the glad bygone moments which they recall, and be quite sure that if those moments have borne no good fruit in the past and present, or will not for the future, it is the fault not of the roses and ribbons but of the wearers.

FLATTERY

EVER since the days of Solomon the flatterer has had a bad name. He has been shown up alike by ancient and modern writers in a variety of garbs, but always with reprobation. Xerxes and Canute, we know, both had their flatterers, and most kings and great men have had theirs. People have been flattered even by imitation of their defects. Many of us remember the lines in which Pope has commemorated at once his own infirmities and the adulation which must have been almost harder to bear :

> There are who to my person pay their court :
> I cough like Horace, and though lean, am short ;
> Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high ;
> Such Ovid's nose ; and 'sir, you have an eye'—
> Go on, obliging creatures, let me see
> All that disgraced my betters, met in me ;
> Say for my comfort, languishing in bed,
> 'Just so immortal Maro held his head,'
> And when I die, be sure you let me know
> Great Homer died three thousand years ago.

Yet the fact remains that poets, however warmly they may protest against flattery, not only deal largely in it themselves, but have no objection to receiving it. 'Some people like it laid on with a trowel!'[1] is the ejaculation we can hardly repress when we read the language in which the poets of his age addressed Augustus, or the fulsome strains in which the poets and preachers of France and England complimented the kings and great men of the seventeenth and eighteenth

[1] *As You Like It*, i. 2.

centuries. Take this, for instance, from Bossuet's 'Funeral Oration on Marie-Thérèse d'Autriche' (wife of Louis XIV), spoken in presence of her son:

'Pendant que ce grand roi la rendait la plus illustre de toutes les reines, vous la faisiez, MONSEIGNEUR, la plus illustre de toutes les mères. Vos respects l'ont consolée de la perte de ses autres enfans. Vous les lui avez rendus; elle s'est vue renaître dans ce Prince qui fait vos délices et les nôtres; et elle a trouvé une fille digne d'elle dans cette auguste Princesse, qui par son rare mérite, autant que par les droits d'un nœud sacré, ne fait avec vous qu'un même cœur. Si nous l'avons admirée dès le moment qu'elle parut, le Roi a confirmé notre jugement; et maintenant devenue, malgré ses souhaits, la principale décoration d'une cour, dont un grand Roi fait le soutien, elle est la consolation de toute la France.'

One wonders how the Dauphine and others knew which way to look when such things were being said in their presence.

But England was not far behind. I take this dedication at random from an old *Spectator*, and I may observe in so doing that it is less offensive than most effusions of the kind, because it is, in the main, true, though hardly what it would now be considered good taste to say to a man's face in his own lifetime. It is to the great Lord 'Sommers' (*sic*), Baron Evesham. After some preliminaries it goes on:

'While Justice, Candor, Equanimity, a zeal for the good of your Country, and the most persuasive Eloquence in bringing over others to it, are valuable Distinctions, you are not to expect that the Publick will so far comply with your Inclinations as to forbear celebrating such extraordinary Qualities. It is in vain that you have endeavoured to conceal your share of Merit, in the many National services which you have effected. Do what you will, the present age will be talking of your Virtues, though Posterity alone will do them justice. Other men pass through oppositions and contending Interest in the ways of Ambition; but your great abilities have been

invited to Power, and importuned to accept of Advancement. Nor is it strange that this should happen to your Lordship, who could bring into the service of your Sovereign the Arts and Policies of Ancient *Greece* and *Rome*; as well as the most exact knowledge of our own constitution in particular, and of the Interests of Europe in general; to which I must also add a certain Dignity in yourself, that (to say the least of it) has been always equal to those great Honours which have been conferred upon you.

'It is very well known how much the Church owed to you in the most dangerous day it ever saw—that of the Arraignment of its Prelates; and how far the Civil Power, in the late and present Reign, has been indebted to your Counsels and Wisdom.'

After praising his Lordship's admirable private qualities, taste, and manners, the writer winds up with—

'But if I should take notice of all that might be observed in your Lordship, I should have nothing new to say upon any other Characters of Distinction.'

This is pretty well; even for so confessedly great a man as Lord Somers. It is, however, interesting in itself, and it raises the question, 'If what we say be perfectly true, can it be called flattery? and if so, is flattery always blameable?'

When flattery is nothing more than a judicious selection of some truths and omission of others, are we to find fault with it? Of course, we should all agree that the vulgarer forms of flattery, such as telling people they are handsome when they are ugly, or clever when they are stupid, and the like, must be wrong just *because* they are false. But where are we to draw the line in the other case? When are we justified in telling our neighbour that we or the world admire him?

Surely it is right to encourage people sometimes.

After all, a great many of us are *too* diffident, too easily put out of conceit with ourselves. Our climate is sometimes depressing, so is the rheumatism and neuralgia that it very often produces. Our national character is that of a grim sense of duty rather than of that joyous *abandon*, to express which our language has no equivalent.

A clergyman preaches his carefully prepared Sunday's sermon; it rains, the church is stuffy, some people have yawned; it still rains. Life at the church-door becomes a struggle with mackintoshes and umbrellas. The flame of nobler thoughts and feelings evoked by the discourse seems at once extinguished by the drenching showers. Nobody is overheard saying, 'What a beautiful sermon!' The bits of conversation are—'George, *do* hail that cab'; 'Mary Anne, wrap Miss Ethel up in that shawl'; 'Did you see that woman? she nearly poked out my eye', and so on. The clergyman goes back to cold beef—cold everything; not perhaps exactly disappointed, because he is not an enthusiastic young curate, who has still to learn what a stoutly resisting medium will be opposed to his ideas, but a father of a family who is used to being imperfectly understood. His wife hasn't thought it worth while to light the study fire, and is wondering whether he is vexed. Oh! how he *does* want a little encouragement, a little warming up. The family are total abstainers, and tea-time is a long, long way off, with a catechizing first. Now, if any of us were a visitor at the house, should we not feel it not only allowable, but a positive duty, if the sermon had been reasonably good, to let the preacher see that it had interested us? Of course, this has to be

done with taste and tact ; perhaps by telling his wife or daughter, perhaps by taking advantage of a turn in the conversation, perhaps by judiciously letting him know how some one else, whose judgement he valued, had spoken of it, or of some previous effort. Much would obviously depend on the age and position of both parties ; still it is easy to imagine instances where a little kindly appreciation would send the clergyman to his afternoon catechizing with a pleasant glow, an agreeable stimulus, and give him an *aplomb* which would make his work quite a different thing.

It is likely to be said in reply that only little minds care for praise. We shall be told of the preacher who, when some one said his sermon was a fine one, replied that the devil had told him so before he got down the pulpit stairs. We shall be reminded of Milton and Dante, and other great men who professed a lofty indifference to the opinion of their fellow-creatures, and soared along in stately solitude over the heads of the multitude.

Notwithstanding all this, we may beg leave to differ, and maintain that to like encouragement is no sign of a little mind. Curiously enough, while very small people have a never-failing sense of their own importance, very great ones are often easily disheartened and put out of conceit with themselves. Their standard is a high one ; and besides that, many of them are so highly strung and so sensitive that they become conscious the moment they cease to interest others, and often fancy they do so when it is not the case. It was Prospero, the great magician, when he was telling a very momentous story, who fancied he

was boring Miranda. The *real* bore of the play, good old Gonzalo, never discovered that he was one!

It is only on this supposition that we can understand the frequent phenomenon of a man or woman of a really high order of intellect being gratified by the somewhat clumsy flattery of vastly inferior minds. 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' Many of us are rightly shy of telling a great actor or singer how much we admired and enjoyed his performance. *Cela va sans dire*, in our minds. We would not venture to take the liberty. Meanwhile, others who are not troubled with delicate scruples approach him with the banalities which we should have thought the stomach of his sense would have turned against, and, to our surprise, he receives them with an air of gratification. *Must* there be always people in any circle who will utter what most of us deem too sacred for utterance? and is it only by means of the tasteless and vulgar that high merit can be made to feel how much it is valued? If so, there is a good word to be said for the fools of this world as well as the angels. Where, then, are we to draw the line? Clearly there are times when it is well to praise, and others when praise degenerates into flattery.

As a rule, praise comes well from superiors to inferiors. A head-master may praise a boy; a boy would be an impudent young rascal if he praised his head-master (luckily, the temptation to this is rare). A bishop may praise a curate, but it is as well for a curate (or even a curate's wife) not to praise a bishop; though the curate's wife may wring the bishop's wife's hand in private, and say what a very beautiful address that was this afternoon.

A man at the head of his profession may praise

a beginner; but if the beginner praised a man at the head of his profession, it would look as if the junior barrister knew more than the Lord Chancellor. Again, it is usually in better taste to praise an isolated action or a production of genius, than a man's character as a whole. If you tell the President of the Royal Academy how beautiful you think one of his pictures—especially the girl's head to the left, or that delicious shimmer of opalescent light in the middle distance, it may be all very well; but if you walked up and told him he was the greatest artist of his day, he would be justified in being as deaf as old Sir Joshua.

The reason of this is that the end and aim of good society is to enable people to forget themselves. 'Sir, you have but two topics—yourself and me; and I am sick of both,'[1] is exactly what we should *not* like to have said to us. But you may talk to a man if you really know and care (not otherwise) about his work, because that is impersonal, and when a man really cares for his work he never leaves off caring for it—unless he has a hobby or a chronic complaint to take its place.

Again, the language of compliment is often a sort of flag of truce—a sign that the other person wishes to be friendly. Perhaps relations have been somewhat strained between A. and B. A. has declined one or two of B.'s invitations, or B. has been told something A. said of him behind his back, or B. has refused to give a letter of recommendation to A.'s particularly stupid son. Anyhow, there is a little stiffness when they next meet. B. determines to take

[1] Dr. Johnson to Boswell.

his key-note from A. (the offended party). If A. goes out of his way to admire B.'s dog, or his old china, or tells him how delighted he was with his last book, it may be taken less as flattery for flattery's sake than as a holding out the right hand of fellowship, an indication of a desire to let bygones be bygones.

Again, flattery, or let us say compliment, between the sexes has its own well-understood rules. Old gentlemen are allowed to flatter young ladies; middle-aged ladies are allowed to flatter any member of the opposite sex who seems to expect it—and they mostly do! Compliment is a woman's small change, and goes into the waistcoat pocket naturally like a porter's tip. One might as well call a threepenny bit thus administered, bribery, as the pretty speeches of a hostess, flattery. They just serve to lubricate the wheels and keep society going. What are women for but to put men into good humour with themselves? A woman by doing so often makes a man what she tells him he is. Of course, she is not to be insincere, but she may pick out the pleasantest thing she can think of to say, and say it in the pleasantest way, and if people choose to call it flattery, why, they must! Only from the days of Abigail downwards a woman with a courteous way of putting things has often averted great evils, and kept men from saying and doing things they would be sorry for afterwards. I think, however, we need a caution here. 'Nabal is his name, and folly is with him,' is not quite the way a wife should speak even of a bad husband; and women, in their desire to make things pleasant, should never let loose their tongues against the absent. This is, of course, the great drawback of a

complimentary style of conversation. The least exaggeration or insincerity often lands us in the opposite difficulty. If your friend's boy is trying for a scholarship, and Smith major is running him very hard, it is better not to say you *hate* Smith major, or that you wish he would get scarlet fever; first of all, because it is not true, and ought not to be true, and secondly, because a time may come when Smith major may be your brother-in-law or your son-in-law, or perhaps you may end in being Mrs. Smith yourself.

Another drawback of insincere compliment is that it so often produces a reaction. When we read the letters of Junius, for instance, we can see that they are a reaction against the overstrained and exaggerated flattery of the courtiers in prose and poetry which had preceded them. There is no rudeness so rude or so offensive as that which has been preceded by an excess of servility and over-courtliness. And reason good; when once we become insincere, we have no trustworthy standard of veracity to go by, our courtesy has not sprung from right motives, or been guided by right rules. We have lost our sense of fitness and proportion, and are always in extremes. There is no complexion so ghastly as a cheek that *has* been rouged, when the rouge is off.

Is not the true criterion, whereby to distinguish between kindly compliment and flattery, the criterion of *motive*? So long as we say pleasant things to encourage or give pleasure without any ulterior ends of our own to promote, we are probably right in so doing.

If we really seek the good of our neighbour we shall soon acquire a delicate intuition as to when it

behoves us to praise him and when not. If we study children, for instance, we shall quickly see when and how encouragement ought to be given. And we shall never praise or sympathize with one person at another's expense. When you say Madame F—— sings very well, it is unnecessary to add, 'she sings far better than Signora G——'. Why compare two good things?

Again, we should never flatter people in order to gain advantage for ourselves. No one can be too scrupulous in withholding anything that could be possibly construed as flattery from those who have it in their power to confer advantages on them. This seems hard on both parties, but it cannot be helped; on the other hand, we should not pique ourselves in being rude to the rich, the prosperous, or the distinguished. Perhaps one might go so far as to add that they live in such an atmosphere of consideration, that what seems over-civility to us, is only what they are accustomed to every day. If you had two guests to stay with you, one rich and the other poor, you would probably be justified in putting Crœsus into the best bedroom. Your best bedroom would not seem at all splendid to him, whereas your poorer visitor would find the attic in your house quite as comfortable as the three pair back in his own lodgings. We cannot alter people's worldly positions; it is hardly showing respect *of* persons to show respect *for* persons. At the same time one ought to more than make up for it to the poor man in other ways. He will probably need far more help and sympathy from us—more very likely of our time and thought than his richer neighbour, and may very well be content to

forgo a few external civilities for the real care and kindness which we should feel bound to give him. A little kindly flattery—or at least compliment—may well be bestowed here ; as it may be on the aged or on those who for any other reason are out of heart and out of spirits.

How charming is Sir Walter Scott's description in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* :

> His trembling hand had lost the ease
> Which marks security to please ;
> And scenes long past, of joy and pain,
> Came wildering o'er his aged brain—
> He tried to tune his harp in vain.
> The pitying Duchess praised its chime,
> And gave him heart, and gave him time,
> Till every string's according glee
> Was blended into harmony.

How characteristic of Scott himself, with his wonderful power of appreciating the efforts of others, though far inferior to his own !

After all, is not much which cold and selfish men call flattery, only the natural warmth and enthusiasm of some happy dispositions which really find material for admiration and approval where others would only criticise ? Which of these classes, we wonder, has done most good to the world ?

A PLEA FOR FETISH WORSHIP

MANY years ago the writer was acquainted with a curious little mongrel dog, who like others of his sort was far more clever, original, and intelligent than dogs who could boast a flawless pedigree. Many stories were current in the family about him, which are unfortunately not to the present purpose, but one little peculiarity deserves notice. He was found one day barking at a particular stone in the road, running round it and up to it in the greatest excitement. He tried to carry it home in his mouth, but could not do this without human assistance. When the stone was taken to his mistresses' house, his excitement recommenced. No one could imagine why, or what there was in that particular stone to cause it to be singled out for so much notice, when apparently any other stone in the road would have done as well. 'It 's Tawny's fetish,' some one said, and so apparently it was. Probably some of the readers of these pages may have had dogs which displayed similar unaccountable peculiarities. But I only mention it now to illustrate a not uncommon feature in human nature. Many human beings, and not all of them savages, have had fetishes, but the question is what led them to fix upon that particular fetish? Why is one stock or stone, one tree, or one rock, selected as the special object for the cultus of the savage? Is it that under certain

circumstances the brain is more active and alive than at other times, and that impressions received at those moments are deeper than others? Can we explain, for instance, why we remember one name or two out of a whole string of names, or why in dreams one particular triviality out of our daily life—some impression we were barely conscious of when we received it—should be the one to reproduce itself in our slumbering brain? We may suppose it was some hardly explicable cause that dictated the savage's choice of his fetish, or the dog's choice of his stone.

Those who have studied children will know that they, in the same way, take fright at some perfectly harmless object, and shudder or scream with terror as they approach it, while things we expect to frighten them have no effect upon them. But once select your fetish and the business is done. There was no particular reason why Titania should have become enamoured of an ass, except that it was the first thing she happened to see on awakening while under the influence of the charm. But has not Shakspere, with his usual insight, portrayed in her the unreasoning passionate devotion which not only fairies, but men and women, so frequently display? There is in human nature a wealth of emotion, fear, awe, devotion, a desire to propitiate, to sacrifice oneself to or for an ideal, something which is all ready to be poured into the nearest channel that presents itself. And the power of the fetish is a growing one. The oftener you worship, the more zealous does your worship become. Still more is this the case if you have other fellow-worshippers, and you and they and your forefathers have all worshipped the same object—be it

a tree, a stone, a piece of wood, a rude image—no matter what! The intrinsic beauty or value of the fetish goes for nothing. The most beautiful statue cannot command the veneration which one of these primitive monuments inspires. The latter has on its side all the force of habit, of antiquity, of tradition. The very fact that so many generations have adored it, is in itself a sanction and a consecration; and a commonplace fragment of wood or stone, which till it was rudely fashioned into shape differed in no perceptible way from the other stocks and blocks around it, has become the visible centre of the spiritual aspirations of a family, a tribe, or a nation.

The fetish worship of the savage, however, is only one illustration of a widespread law that if you only fix your attention long enough and often enough on any one object it will fascinate you to the exclusion of everything else. We all know the released prisoner of the Bastille described in the *Tale of Two Cities*, who could only be tranquillized by being allowed to continue the shoemaking which he had had to practise when in captivity. This is why, again, we get so fond of our own property—because it is habitually before our eyes, and our minds are, to a certain extent, concentrated upon it. Every one has known the exquisite misery, when travelling, of losing a bag or portmanteau, the whole contents of which are not—bag included—worth a couple of pounds. Yet I believe the loss of double its value in money would not distress us so much as the disappearance of this shabby old travelling companion with its equally shabby and familiar contents. Perhaps, too, when we are seated in a third-class carriage we catch ourselves wondering

how any one can be found to care about the singularly ugly and unattractive babies, made even more unattractive by the hideous green or violet plush or red merino garments in which these unfortunate innocents are attired. But happily they are their mothers' fetishes. So, again, a good nurse can make something like a fetish of a bad leg. There is a kind of fascination about any disease when our curative powers are employed upon it. Probably some doctors and nurses feel the blank when a well-known leg or arm no longer needs their attention, much as a novelist does when he has finished his last chapter and said good-bye to his characters. Novel-writing is, one need not say, an extreme instance of fetish worship. A novelist sets to work without even a stock or stone to begin upon. The phenomenal world consists for him, in his capacity of novelist, of a blank sheet of paper, a pen (or a typewriter), and the hand that guides it. Yet by dint of thinking long enough about—perhaps he could hardly tell you what, himself—ideas rise in his brain. Shapes develop, misty at first, but gradually solidifying into reality. As he proceeds, this fetish of his own creation becomes yet more and more his master, nay, his tyrant. Like the poodle in *Faust*, or like Alice when she drank of the fatal phial, it swells and swells till the walls of the room will hardly contain it. It is with him, sleeping and waking, at table, out walking, when he is smoking, when he is not smoking, in fact it possesses him for the time, and he cannot get away from its sphere of influence.

Another fetish, and a very ugly one, is a real or supposed injury which we have received. This fetish

generally grows to gigantic proportions in the haunts of leisure, where there is plenty of spare time for its development. Young people may be said to be less addicted to it than old ones ; and the same may be said of the love of money—often the one dominating factor in an otherwise dull and empty life. Another very common fetish is what may be called 'social evils', or rather, of course, the combat with social evils. Some very good men and women are so haunted by one or other form of evil that to hear them talk you would think the whole world was given over to vice, drunkenness, cruelty to children, cruelty to animals, forgery, adulteration of food, or whatever their particular *bête noire* may be, that there were no animals in the creation of any other colour than black.

The Mrs. Jellybys and Mrs. Pardiggles of this generation are not yet extinct, and characters much nobler than they are sometimes, it is to be feared, unable to preserve their balance when they look into the depths of human sin, sorrow, and suffering. No one will deny that such things exist, and ought to be if possible 'stamped out', but he or she who seeks to remedy them must be a man or woman of rare self-control and with a very unusual equilibrium of faculties. But perhaps this is touching on too serious ground. Let us turn to a topic equally common, but not so painful. A curious form of fetish worship is the true Briton's love for anything, or rather anybody, with a title. He still cherishes a belief—and long may he retain it !—that in some unaccountable way it is a desirable and delightful thing to know a lord, and (as Du Maurier would have put it) 'an effulgence of

consummate achievement' to dine with a duke. Get a countess to open your bazaar and its success is guaranteed, unless indeed at the same date and in the same neighbourhood a Princess or Royal Duchess has condescended to show herself at a rival function. What *is* this passion for rank and title, when we come to analyse it? It is not exactly loyalty, because one can be loyal without seeking any kind of personal contact with the sovereign. The members of our titled aristocracy are not always handsome, or clever, and their standard of good manners varies as much as their looks. There are good and bad people among them as there are in all classes. England is practically now a democracy; and yet, strange to say, this curious fascination exercised by rank and title has not lost its force. People who could least be accused of snobbishness somehow generally manage to put Lady Selina's card at the top of the card-basket. Rare indeed are the eyes which do not kindle at the least hint of an invitation to a titled party, and few are the men and women who can pronounce the name of an Earl with real, though perhaps they may with studied, indifference. Still more absurd, as it seems to outsiders, is the craving which seems to take possession of the *habitués* of a court for the least bit of personal notice from those in very high quarters. To us who 'have not been under the wand of the magician' it seems very strange that a few words of commendation, a trifling present, the smallest of small recognitions, can be so eagerly sought after, but we have good authority for saying that such has been known to be the case. This instinct of humanity may in some lights be looked on as pathetic—for surely there *is* a

pathos in the hunger which it reveals for some object outside ourselves to expend our admiration upon, and to satisfy our cravings. But may we not say, with perfect truth that humanity would be much more to be pitied if it had no fetishes? It is quite true, of course, that earthly things cannot satisfy, and that the highest natures are those whom nothing but the highest can satisfy; but, on the other hand, there is no denying that the Power which made us seems to have constituted us in such a way that the finite and the phenomenal are, and always will be, very interesting to most of us, and that it is a most merciful provision of nature that we can occupy ourselves with what are, it is true, very trivial interests, and which we, very often, laughingly own to be such. Happy is the man or woman who can really enjoy a game, be it chess, whist, draughts, or even halma. Playing at 'Patience' has lightened many an hour of invalid life. Cowper[1] speaks of cards as among the most mischievous of all

> the tricks
> That idleness has ever yet contrived
> To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,
> To palliate dulness, and give Time a shove.

Yet one cannot help thinking that a friendly rubber now and then would often have been beneficial to that over-excitable brain. Moralists speak severely of 'killing time', but really time has to be killed, or at least put under chloroform now and then; and there are many of us who may be thankful for any harmless amusement, especially of a social kind.

[1] *The Task*, 'Winter Evening.'

Violins are but wood and catgut, playing-cards are but paste-board, chessmen are bits of ivory, and yet how they can—and how healthily they very often do, absorb us. The same is true of needlework. When the gates of Paradise were closed on our first parents, Eve little knew—it is true—the future sorrows of many of her daughters, but neither did she know how many of their most trying hours would be solaced by the arts of dress-making, weaving, and embroidery. The distaff which may be seen in many mediaeval representations of our first mother is not only a penitential emblem—it is also a prophecy of consolation—of all the consolations derivable by women from those handicrafts which in all ages have been specially theirs, and which the Greek world placed under the tutelage of the goddess of wisdom—Pallas Athené.

In fact, with both sexes, the instrument of labour is the source of comfort—not only by the direct benefits it confers of food or clothing, but by the operation of that law already noticed which enables us to be almost invariably interested in anything we put our hands to. So long as we are in the phenomenal world—this world of tangible things—so long as we are in this world of time and space-relations, it will be impossible for us not to be interested in the work and play which arises out of them.

'Use temporal things,' said Thomas à Kempis, 'but desire eternal.' To maintain this balance between the things of time and those of eternity is the problem of every thoughtful man's or woman's life. Here and there we find, of course, cases of unmistakable 'vocation'. St. Francis, St. Dominic,

St. Vincent de Paul, St. Teresa, St. Katharine of Siena, Juliana of Norwich, and others who seem to be gifted in a way above the ordinary level of humanity, and whom to name is to venerate. But such a vocation, such gifts, are not the lot of every one, and there certainly ought to be no attempt to 'force the course of the river'. In the case of some mystics, and in some phases of religious life both among Protestants and Roman Catholics, when the balance has dipped on the side of 'other-worldliness', human nature has taken its revenge, sometimes in actual insanity, frequently in religious melancholy, visions, trances, and the like, or by inducing some of those morbid conditions which are well-known results of religious overstrain, and of which many a convent, many a biography, many an asylum, could tell the story. It is pathetic how in some cases the mind fastens on the least fragment of trivial occupation to obtain relief from the tension of a so-called 'religious' life. How nuns will spend their time in dressing dolls, or in fussing over some of the minutiae of ecclesiastical decoration! and how many become the prey of absurd religious scruples!

Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret.

You cannot pitch the standard for humanity higher than humanity will bear—just as, if you try to strain the human voice higher or lower than its normal two or two and a half octaves, you ruin it altogether.

The mention of convents, however, suggests another kind of fetish worship—the making a fetish of the community, school, college, profession, or service to which we belong. A sailor must, we imagine, make

a fetish of his ship, a public school master of his Eton or Harrow, a coachman of his horses. This pride in one's own small department of the great world's business is a very wholesome one, if kept within proper bounds ; the difficulty is to know what are its limits. It is quite necessary that the schoolmaster should 'run' his school, the sailor idolize and idealize his ship, the member of a government throw himself heart and soul into the tactics of that government. We all must worship our fetish more or less. But what of all the other fetishes of all the other tribes ? Are we to consider them as mere *eidola gentium*, mere stocks and stones, while ours is a real living force ? Here it is, I think, that the balance wants redressing from the side of other-worldliness. For it will be owned by most thoughtful men, that if we are to have an ideal big enough to comprehend all other people's ideals it will not be derivable from utilitarian motives. No building up of a great pile of human occupations and interests will ever create organic unity. The power which enables us to give other men and their pursuits their due place in our scheme of life can never be mere self-interest once removed ; it must be something which looks at the end to which human life is tending, at the focus of all these scattered rays, at the terminus of these countless, these intricate, these apparently divergent pathways.

For after all, though these lower interests tend to be absorbing, it is not necessary, nor right, that they should be so. Perhaps, however, the mistake that we make is not in thinking our own occupation (I am speaking now of real occupations, not of mere pastimes) as important, but in not realizing the importance of

the pursuits of others. Here it is where we feel ourselves so miserably finite. Very, very few of us have imagination, brain-power, or sympathy enough to do more than mind our own business, to plough our own furrow, to sing our own part of the chorus. We resemble actors who have never read the drama they perform in, as a whole, but, like Charles Lamb's 'Barbara S—', only the little slips which contain our own parts and 'cues'. We may see life—or our own little bit of it—steadily, but alas! how very few of us see it whole. And it is here that the need is felt of some force or influence which will enable us to attain to that higher level from which we can—without losing any interest in our own immediate surroundings—do justice to the countless claims of others, and enlarge the sphere of our own being by realizing the magnitude of the scale on which our Creator works, with whom the least is as the greatest, and by whom all apparently discordant elements are brought into one great and wondrous harmony.

THE ENGLISH CHURCH AND THE ENGLISH CHARACTER[1]

WHEN the history of the present War comes to be written, perhaps some fifty years hence, the attitude of the historian will be very different from our own. Where we see 'the trees', he will see 'the wood'. Where we see a confused tangle of

[1] *Mankind and the Church.* Edited by the Right Rev. H. H. Montgomery. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd. 1907.) And other contemporary literature.

events, he will see the big working of cause and effect, and distinct lines of tendency. Where we see material and tangible results, he will see great moral and spiritual forces behind them. And among these forces, he will doubtless observe that one of the greatest is national character, and more especially the English character.

What a bundle of anomalies[1] that character seems to be: so much in earnest and yet apparently so careless, so worldly and yet so unworldly, so matter-of-fact and yet so chivalrous, so illogical and yet so successful, so firm in the handling of subject races and yet so much revered, so often apparently on the verge of failure and yet 'muddling through', we ourselves can scarcely say how!

A short extract from an article in the *St. Louis Republic*, as given in the *Daily Chronicle* of December 24, 1914, may not be out of place here. The article is all the more remarkable inasmuch as St. Louis contains a very large proportion of people of German birth or origin. In the State of Missouri, of which St. Louis is the chief city, 49 per cent. of the population are actually of German birth.

'Whenever Germany and France, with their highly centralized and logically wrought out Governments, have contemplated the fabric known as the British Empire they have smiled smiles of disdain.

'This fearful and wonderful fabric has no central body. There

[1] Some most interesting points of resemblance may be found between the English and the Athenian character, as described by Pericles (Thuc. ii. 38-41): the love of games and amusements; the passion for foreign novelties; the extreme openness of life and publicity of methods; the light-hearted 'casual' way of entering on war; the readiness to confer rather than receive benefits; and the sense of latent power which underlies the national life.

is no "Bundesrath" or Imperial Council. No collective action of its units is possible. The relation to them of the mother country is illogical, ill-defined. To the foreigner accustomed to the federation of the American States or of the units of the German Empire the Government looks planless and ineffective.

'All of which is preliminary to the observation that there is not at the present moment any more effective institution in the whole world of political fabrics than the British Empire. Whatever its machinery lacks appears to be supplied by its spirit. The defects of its body are made up for by the unity of its soul.

'The fact cannot be gainsaid that England, who does not begin to be as logical as Germany or as systematic as France in matters of government, has nevertheless the knack of making men step out of their own free will to die in her defence. She has the gift of keeping alive, across tumbling seas round half a world, the undying bond that unites the heart to home. She has shown herself indifferent to the possession of the taxing power over her colonies—but what matters it? Those colonies willingly tax themselves to send her warships, and their sons seize their rifles in time of strife to go to her aid. She has the wisdom so to train and guide the swarthy children of alien races, and even the foes of yesteryear, that they put their living bodies between England and England's enemies. She has a fearfully muddled theory of government, but her practice of government lays hold on the deepest things in the soul of man.'

Perhaps, before endeavouring to analyse the English character, we may think a little of the antecedents which have helped to produce it. We may first notice the geographical aspect of England. She has about as much coast-line as it is possible for any country of her size to have; in other words she is bound to be an active maritime nation. Nature has been generous to her in rich supplies of oak timber for ship-building, and, in due time, of iron and coal for steam-vessels. Her area is large enough to afford sustenance for her inhabitants while her population only consists of a few millions, but quite

inadequate for a rapidly growing population. She may be said to be 'in Europe, but not of it'. That precious twenty-five miles of salt water between Dover and Calais has been sufficient to preserve her individuality, but not too great to prevent her commerce with the world at large. Again, let us consider our climate. It is nothing if not versatile. A few hours may bring us a total change of temperature. We not unfrequently have wintry conditions in June and lovely balmy days in February. The American who said 'England had no climate, but only samples of weather' was not very far wrong.

It has long been a favourite theory with the present writer that Shakspere, who reflects *par excellence* the English character, could never have been so great a dramatist had it not been for the English climate. The whimsical changes of his birthday month of April, the rapid shiftings of light and shade, the sudden gleams amid the purple clouds, all the countless freaks and surprises which Nature has in store for the Englishman, seem to find themselves reflected in Shakspere's pages; and besides that, there is generated in the English character that adaptability, that instinct for making the best of things as they are, that strong ineradicable sense of humour and elasticity of spirit, which makes him so good a colonist, and so resourceful a soldier.

Again, if we look at the map of our country, we shall see that it consists of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Here too we have fresh elements of variety. The Highland Scots, the Irish, the Welsh have all their strongly-marked characteristics; the Scots Lowlanders and the English Borderers have their own

vigorous and independent types, while the infusion of Scandinavian blood in Cumberland and Westmorland, and the large Danish settlements in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, bring other and valuable contributions to the Anglo-Saxon folk of the Midlands, and Southern England; while Devonshire and Cornwall again offer racial characteristics more akin to those of Wales and Brittany.

If we look through a Clergy List, or an Army List, we shall see in the surnames of the various members of the professions specimens of all these races, and we shall also see an important sprinkling of names, few but influential, derived from Huguenot sources, and due to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and of course a good many importations from France, Italy, and especially Germany. Nor must the Jewish element be overlooked. We have left to the last the most important thing of all—the Roman occupation which stratified England, and to a certain extent made the country civilized and habitable, besides paving the way for the work of Christian missionaries; and the Norman Conquest, which not only brought England under one powerful ruler, but gave her grand cathedrals, and castles and monasteries, and brought her into contact (through France) with Latin civilization, and has left, as we know, indelible traces on her language and manners. The English character is, in fact, very like Corinthian brass, a composite mass in which many valuable metals are melted together; or we may compare it to a diamond cut into a number of facets, every one of which responds to a different ray of light. Insular as the Englishman is said to be, his human sympathies

are unusually wide. His instinctive attitude to outsiders is a kindly one. He has earned the undying gratitude of the Jewish race. He may call black or brown men 'poor beggars', he may look upon them as a sort of grown-up children; but he is, as a rule, wonderfully forbearing with them, and this is as true of the humblest private soldier as it is of his superiors. The extraordinary unselfishness and kindness of some of our 'Tommies' is indeed a thing to be proud of. There is a delightful story of Mrs. Steel's, *In the Permanent Way*, which tells us how a pertinacious fakir *would* sit on the very line of a newly made Indian railway, and how every day a good-natured Englishman stopped the train, gently lifted the fakir from his place, and went on, time after time, without doing him any injury, and finally died holding him in his arms. Some other Europeans who shall be nameless would probably have made much shorter work of the unfortunate fakir!

This elasticity and adaptability of the English character is curiously combined with a very strong sense of individuality and love of freedom. The Englishman, unconsciously acting on Bacon's principle, studies his surroundings, human or otherwise, and sees how they best can be turned to account, not by force or constraint, but by (so far as possible) sympathetic treatment. When he finds it absolutely necessary to put his foot down, he does it firmly, as in the case of suttee in India; but on the whole he is a very tolerant master and rides his steed 'on the snaffle' rather than the curb. Consequently, as the present war is showing us, he wins the affection and confidence of subject or partially dependent races in

a very remarkable way. He is—on the whole—fair, firm and just, and truthful: he seldom goes back from his word, or vacillates in his purpose; and it is this extraordinary combination of constancy of purpose with rapidity of resource and adaptability of means that makes for success in his undertakings.

Obviously, the Englishman is no *doctrinaire*. He is never the slave of a theory or a system. He is not always able to say why he does things, but on the whole his instincts seem to guide him aright. Life is for him one long illustration of the saying *solvitur ambulando*. In 1850 when the Great Exhibition building was being erected, a large and magnificent elm-tree seemed to stand in the way. It was too high for the roof proposed. In Germany, and possibly in France, that tree would have been hewn ruthlessly down; in England the architect, Sir Joseph Paxton, set to work and designed the beautiful coved roof, so familiar to all Londoners, to embrace and shelter its lordly growth. That little tribute to Nature in the midst of a palace of art and commerce, how thoroughly English it is! Our very difficulties have sometimes become our opportunities.

But when we attempt to generalize about the Englishman, we must remember that there is hardly any country in which class-distinctions count for more than in England, though they are outwardly becoming less and less manifest every year. What is the origin of this undoubted cleavage between classes which almost has the same effect as that of differing nationality? Should we be wrong in dating it from the Norman Conquest? It would be absurd to insist on the Norman descent of many of our nobility and gentry

in the present day; but if we go back to the time when Norman French was the language of the court, and when the King (like some of his Hanoverian successors) literally could not understand the vulgar tongue of his English subjects, we shall see that the class-difference has been much accentuated by the difference of race. In the same way the traditions of personal bravery, the comparative refinement of manners, the chivalrous attitude towards the weaker sex (though we cannot forget the tragedy of Joan of Arc), are characteristics of the English gentleman of all classes for which we may, partly at least, thank our Norman inheritance. That the Teutonic blood, much less mixed than our own, is lacking in some of these elements, seems to be shown by some cases of hideous maltreatment of women in the present war; and this is rather curious when we remember how Tacitus speaks of the reverence paid to women by the ancient Germans.

Throughout English history and literature, we see appearing at intervals this lofty character of the English gentleman. We see it (despite some regrettable cruelties) in Edward the Black Prince, in the Earl of Surrey, in Sir Thomas More, Sir Philip Sidney, in Sir Henry Wotton, in many of the Cavaliers, in Falkland, in John Evelyn, in William Pitt and others of his day, in the brave generals who served with Wellington, and in some of our great Anglo-Indians, and not least in men like the late Lord Roberts. In fiction he appears as the 'very perfect gentle knight' of Chaucer, as the Red Cross Knight of Spenser; in Shakspere he is sometimes Bassanio, sometimes Orlando, sometimes Horatio, and is to be

found under many other names. His spirit breathes in the songs of Lovelace and Montrose (though the latter was a Scotchman!). Sometimes we call him Sir Roger de Coverley, sometimes (not without a smile) Sir Charles Grandison. Sometimes he is Guy Mannering, sometimes Thomas Newcome. Even Dickens, when he drew a caricature of him in Sir Leicester Dedlock, could not withhold a tribute to his upright, chivalrous, and affectionate nature. In one shape or another he is the ideal of every well-nurtured English lad, not only of his own class, but of those below him. When we meet with such men in real life we see how their character and tone and bearing tell on their servants, their employés, and all with whom they have to do. The same things may, of course, be said of the women who belong to them; but to pursue that subject would lead us too far afield. The high breeding of the English gentleman, coupled as it happily often is with modesty and a perfect hatred of self-display, is one of the greatest glories of our country, as it is one of her most valuable possessions. Who can say what that last visit of Lord Roberts to 'the Front' may have been worth to us in kindling the loyalty both of English and Indian soldiers? After all, personality is more potent than Krupp guns, bombs or Zeppelins, and thank God it is with us in England yet. Perhaps we may be allowed to refer to the delightful story recently reported of the German prisoner who said to the Englishman, 'After all, it will always be the same. *You* will always be fools; and *we* shall never be gentlemen.'

If we begin to inquire what are the forces that go to the making of an English gentleman, we say at the

outset, good birth and home influence; then good food, plenty of out-of-door life, the public schools with their games and their *esprit de corps*. Alas, they have their drawbacks and their temptations, but when the home has been good we may trust that the growing lad will be able to overcome them.

There is no doubt that whether the immortal saying about Waterloo and the playing fields of Eton was ever really uttered or not, there is a great truth behind it. The instinct for 'playing the game' of which Sir Henry Newbolt delightfully sings has been constantly at work with the high-spirited young officers, many of whom we are mourning to-day. It is one of the privileges of the 'gentleman' that he really plays in school and college games with his heart and soul and limbs. If it could be made possible for all English boys to play games as is done by the more fortunate of them, it would have an excellent effect both on their *moral* and on the recruiting lists. It is not in levelling down but in levelling up, in giving a better chance to the less fortunate boys and girls that the way of progress lies.

In speaking of the universities and public schools we must also bear in mind that they bring out in men of every class many of the best qualities of the gentleman. The habit of associating with a man's superiors in character, in intellectual or physical powers, or in breeding, just at the time when his mind and manners are still in a plastic state, has a most beneficial effect. To take for granted that a man is a gentleman, and treat him as such, is more than half-way to making him one. Of course, there are in all ranks of life men and women who are incurably vulgar, just as

there are many, very many, 'Nature's gentlemen and gentlewomen'. But the ordinary everyday person is very much affected by atmosphere and surroundings; and our experience of women's higher education tends to show us that this is no less true of women than of men.

But now let us approach the main subject of this article, and consider how far the Church has had her share in making the English character what it is. It is sometimes said that the Church of England is the Church of the educated and privileged class. It is difficult to generalize in these matters, and no doubt a well-worked parish in any crowded centre of population would show us that the Church only needs to be properly presented to the masses to be greatly loved and prized by them; but take England all round, and still more if we look at Canada, America, or Australia, we shall see that the Church does not find it easy to hold her own.

Take the case of the ordinary Thomas Atkins and of his wife. What are they, and such as they, to make of the Bible and Prayer Book? The magnificent Elizabethan diction, which is a delight to the cultured ear and mind, is almost like a foreign language to them. If such a man opens his Prayer Book at the Collects, the words Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and Whitsuntide seem familiar to him, and so, we will hope, are the great root-ideas which underlie them. But what is he to make of such words as Epiphany, or Quinquagesima, or Rogation days? What is the meaning of that long couple of pages headed *Quicunque vult*? The Prayer Book is certainly bristling with difficulties. And there must be large portions of the Bible—Leviticus, Amos, Hosea, Ezekiel, Zechariah,

and the Epistle to the Romans—which he probably never *attempts* to understand. A few of the Psalms, the Gospels, Genesis, Job, the Books of Samuel, &c., and certain portions of the Book of Revelation doubtless come home to him. But it really is not much to be wondered at that he forsakes the Church, which speaks to him in an almost unknown tongue, and drifts. The alternative to many is not so much irreligion as indifference; many, on the other hand, are attracted by the familiar phraseology and the individualistic appeal of the 'meeting' or 'chapel', and by its rough but popular hymnology. Here, too, there is a danger which many Nonconformists recognize —on the one hand, the coarsening, impoverishment, and vulgarization of religion, where the uneducated are concerned; and the cold, dry, unspiritual and latitudinarian theology which Germany and Holland often appear to foster, and from which neither England nor Scotland is wholly free. Far be it from us to disparage Protestant Nonconformity. What England would have been without Wesleyanism it were best not to inquire, and the Presbyterianism of Scotland has produced, in both sexes, some of the finest characters in history and private life that the world has ever seen. The Church of England has something to learn from it, even if she has much to teach. But, when all has been said, the Anglican Church has an unapproachable glory of her own in moulding characters and in training human lives. The English gentleman is what he is, to a great extent because she has ruled over his home, his boyhood, and his adolescence. She has taught him reverence for authority without crushing his independence of spirit; she has coloured his whole

life by her sacramental teaching, her round of Christian seasons, her beautiful liturgy, her exquisite 'occasional services', and that large use of Holy Scripture in which she predominates over all other Churches. She has shown him religion in its nobility, its historical setting, its dignity, its honesty, its purity, and its intensity. While other bodies may depend more or less on the individual minister, it is the glory of the Church that she is greater than any of her ministers.

The form remains, the function never dies.

Are we then to say that the Church of England is, after all, the Church of a class? Certainly not; though that class would not be what it is but for her ennobling influence. But we think it is true that though the ideal held up by the Church is too often unrealized, yet it would be a great loss to us all if that ideal ceased to exist. *Plus ultra* should be the motto of every progressive human being. Just in proportion as people are trained and educated and civilized, just in proportion as they feel the narrowness, inadequacy, and imperfection of their old religious surroundings, they tend either to become (which Heaven forbid) indifferent or agnostic, or else just in that proportion they respond to the appeal of a religion which, while it does not, like Romanism, fly in the face of their intellectual progress, not only seems commensurate with their intellectual progress but still continues to soar above it; while, as their sense of beauty, of order, of catholicity develops, it finds a response in the time-honoured and exquisite structure, which is to the spiritual sense what some noble old historic cathedral is to the bodily eye.

One great 'note' of the true religion must always be its appeal to the sense of the Infinite in the soul of man. Of our religious progress we may say—in the poet's words, though in a wider sense,

Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise.

This thought is beautifully expanded by Browning in his poem *Easter Day*. Now it has been always the strength of the Church of England that she responds to the needs of the growing and developing human mind, and that she has the power, when true to herself, of raising those with whom she comes into contact. We may say that the Church of England is very like her noblest poetry. Our greatest poets in their highest moods will never be popular. A foolish music-hall song has for its little day incalculably more vogue than *Paradise Lost*—but what would the greatest minds of our country have been without our highest poetry? It is surely a 'note of the true Church' that she has nothing vulgar or petty or mean or ephemeral about her, and that she possesses the power of appealing not only to humble and simple hearts but to men of the highest intellect and the finest culture. As Lord Bacon said, long ago: 'It is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy may incline the mind of man to atheism, but a further proceeding therein doth bring the mind back to religion.'[1] But the religion to which a man is brought back is not the religion of the childish or the half-educated. His religion must be commensurate with

[1] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book i.

his intellectual progress, and must not offend his cultivated taste. It must respond to his awakened sense of the highest beauty. It must find room for the metaphysical, the historical, the poetical side of his nature. Now this is what the Church of England—more than any other Church in the world—is able to do. The most masculine minds are found responsive to her creed, her liturgy, her theology. Many of us, in mature life or in old age, go back to our childish loves. Natural beauty, sunshine, simple primitive poetry, old songs and ballads, and fairy tales, the loving atmosphere of home—these and such things as these appeal to us more and more as Life draws to its close. But we do not want our nursery toys. The moon looks as magically beautiful as ever, the flowers amaze us with their rich and varied loveliness. We are like children in many ways; but we do not want the dolls and drums and tin soldiers of childhood. It is just so with the religion of mature minds. We want what is real and lasting and beautiful and true. Mere religious claptrap disgusts us. We do not feel stirred or comforted by shallow tracts and poor hymns, nor (in fairness it must be added) by the externals of 'popular' ritualism. Bishop Montgomery in the admirable work mentioned above speaks of the reserve of the Englishman in spiritual matters (p. xxvii).

'A characteristic note of our race is reticence in attitude, speech and gesture. . . . Some express reverence best by an attitude frozen into a statue by the realization of the Divine Presence, and they abhor all genuflections or movements. . . . Others delight in motion, colour, postures, varied vestments. . . . At the same time, and upon the whole, I believe that our own worship as a race will be characterized by a ritual which is sterner and more reticent than either that of the Latin or the East.'

And this reminds us of another characteristic of the Anglican Church, concerning which it is difficult to say whether it is an outcome of the English character or whether the English character has been partly due to it: we mean its two-sidedness, which seems to correspond with what may be roughly called the Latin and Teutonic, the Catholic and the Protestant, the ecclesiastical and the individualistic elements in our nature. It is the glory of the English character, and it is the merit of the English language, never to lose sight of either of these elements. Our language is an exquisite balance of Latin and Teutonic words. Take the first words of the General Confession: 'Almighty and most *merciful* Father, we have *erred* and *strayed* from Thy ways like lost sheep.' How entirely at home the three words we have italicized find themselves among their Anglo-Saxon neighbours, and what music and beauty they lend to the sentence! That our Prayer Book is one long series of compromises only makes it the more resemble our English constitution. But, as Bishop Montgomery has well reminded us, one large factor in the result was due not so much to reason or logic as to the delicate intuition—may we call it the prophetic insight?—of that extraordinary woman, Queen Elizabeth, the last sovereign of real English blood who ever sat on the English throne. She seemed a living exponent of that truly English temperament which has a kind of instinctive perception rather than a logical conviction of what ought to be done.[1] If women are supposed to

[1] 'Il n'y a rien de si conforme à la raison que ce désaveu de la raison' was the acute remark of Pascal (*Pensées*, iv. 272). The whole passage, of which this forms a part, is a most suggestive one.

be illogical, we may call her a woman amongst women. Yet, with all her glaring faults, follies, and inconsistencies she was a marvellous instrument in the hands of Providence, and she saved the English Church from both Romanist and Puritanical excess, while she raised the English nation from something very like exhaustion to a place among the leading nations of Europe which it never entirely forfeited.

'For some time she [Queen Elizabeth] alone understood the difference between an English Church and an Anglican Church. Owing to her resolution, there was time for the lesson to be learned; and Laud was the first who fully apprehended its significance. To him the Church of England was not, as it had been to his predecessors, an arrangement for expressing the religious consciousness of the English people. It was a system instinct with life and full of mighty possibilities, with a world-wide mission peculiarly its own.'[1]

Bishop Montgomery has spoken with great truth of the reserve and reticence of the Englishman in religious matters; and he adds:

'But our tenderest sympathy for him must be in regard to his lack of vision. I do not believe he sees God easily. Partly it must be the effect of climate, for there really seems to be truth in the statement that the nearer you live to the Equator the easier it is to see God, and the further you live away from it the harder it becomes. So he, in common with other cold-climate races, though he has a strong sense of duty, has little vision of God. His Creator knows it is hard for him not to be an agnostic.'

This is quite true; but perhaps it somewhat overlooks the fact that though English *men* are much what the Bishop describes them, yet the description does not apply equally to English *women*, who to

[1] Bishop Creighton, *Historical Lectures*, 'Laud' (quoted here by Bishop Montgomery, p. xxix); and see also Bishop Creighton's fascinating *Life of Queen Elizabeth*.

a certain extent help to redress the balance between righteousness (that truly English quality) and holiness, which, as the Bishop says, is less common among men. It is a truism to say that English women are much more instinctively devout than their husbands and fathers. They have a stronger sense of the unseen world, though it is perhaps too much to say that when nine men out of ten become religious, or preserve the religion of their childhood, it is due to their mothers or their wives. If they think of angels at all they probably bear some good woman's lineaments. And perhaps we may say that our Church represents in some ways this feminine element, which, after all, plays an important part in human life. It does not over-define, it is not grotesquely logical, it leaves room for individual freedom ; there is a practical good sense about it, a sympathy with the personal life of every one of its members, and an avoidance of rigidity both as regarding faith or practice which corresponds with the elasticity of the English character. The Church may well be spoken of by the endearing name of 'Mother'. And yet there is something truly manly in the way in which she emphasizes the moral claim. In her Eucharistic Office she places the Ten Commandments in the forefront[1] of the service, and in her Catechism (1549) she carefully explains them. The pregnant phrase with which that explanation concludes, 'To do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me,' may probably have been in the mind of Lord Nelson (himself the son of a clergyman) when his immortal signal was given ; and the idea of duty, as we all know, has been—may it long continue

[1] Second Book of Edward VI, 1552.

to be !—the guiding star both of our soldiers and our sailors. To thousands this is one of many instances of indebtedness to the English Church, that great teacher of loyalty and of true patriotism. Once more, may we not thank God for a Church which prays day by day for our King and all in authority under him, which gives us special prayers 'for those at sea' and for the time of war, which teaches us—and when was the lesson more needed than now ?—to pray for 'our enemies, persecutors and slanderers', which includes in her Litany almost every form of human need, and still provides us in the Psalter with most glorious songs of triumph ?

One remark may be made in conclusion. In religion as in dealing with social questions do not let us 'level down', but 'level up'. In seeking to adapt our forms of service to the popular needs of a new age let us see to it that we do it by the way of a real enrichment, not by making them poorer. Let us do all that we can in the way of 'lantern-services', simple addresses, prayer-meetings, hymns, and the like, but let us remember that educated men and women have souls and minds and spiritual needs, as well as their poorer brethren. Do not let us mutilate and vulgarize our Church, but let our Church teach us her own lessons of largeness and loftiness of soul, of thoroughness and accuracy in learning, of dignity and reverence, of truth and charity. We have derived a glorious heritage from the Past ; may it be ours to transmit it in its integrity and its purity to generations yet to come !

THE LILAC BUSH

THERE is a lilac bush in the garden which exactly resembles other lilac bushes, in being, for fifty weeks in the year, one of the dullest shrubs in creation. Its leaves are heavy in colour, often dusty, the autumn does not clothe them with picturesque tints ; its seed-vessels—fruit it has none—are dark and uninteresting; at least, to the ordinary spectator. Why then does every garden have its lilac bush, perhaps more than one ? Just because, for perhaps ten days or a fortnight in every year, the lilac bush is a thing of beauty, elegance, and fragrance, with its purple, or still better, its exquisite white clusters, set off by the dull green background of the leaves. The owner of the garden, in his mind's eye, sees the beautiful blossoms on the lilac bush all the year round. They have become part of his spiritual treasure-house of ideas ; and the same may be said of every blossoming tree, of every flower. How miraculously beautiful, for instance, is a yellow crocus, open to the February sunshine ! and yet we could often count on the fingers even of one hand the days in which in any spring we have beheld this delightful revelation in perfection. Yet when once you have seen a crocus in the act—one might almost call it, of adoration—it becomes a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί—a possession for ever, a haunting, oft-recurring vision for the contemplative mind. It is part of Nature's sympathetic wisdom that she never lets us get tired of things. No sooner have we become familiar with the outward reality than a change comes over it. In mountain scenery, for instance, the change is produced

by a variety of atmospheric effects. The outlines of the peaks are there, but (as every sketcher knows) the lights and shades and tints are for ever altering. Here a passing cloud casts its shadow, here a dark hollow is lit up by a sudden gleam, suddenly a flash of sunshine reveals to us the glitter of a streamlet hitherto unseen, or the mountain crests assume a deep violet tone as the evening light expands itself behind them. Our bodily eye never sees the same thing long together, but vision after vision of beauty has passed into our mind. As Browning says, 'The earth changes like a human face' (*Paracelsus*). Only last May I was wandering about an ordinary field. Near me were great hawthorn bushes laden with white blossom. The banks were adorned with the exquisite feathery wild hemlock, that most fairylike and delicate of flowers. Through a gap in the hedge was visible another meadow with a great golden sea of buttercups. I looked and looked again, and thought 'how beautiful, how perfectly beautiful!' But after five or six minutes I felt I did not, just then at all events, want to look any more. I felt like a photographer who has given his 'film' a sufficient 'exposure'. There was nothing more to be done but to go home. I could not count the buttercups. I did not care to pick the hawthorn. I had, so to speak, got hold of the thing with my inward faculties. I could carry the idea of it all about with me, and call it up, as the poet did the daffodils, whenever I chose.

Since then the thought has often occurred to me, that the happiness of disembodied spirits may consist in their being able to have ever present with them at will the beautiful ideas which are after all the best part of our existence in this world.

What we really possess, even in this life, is not any material object, but the idea for which it stands. All the 'pleasures of Hope', all the 'pleasures of memory' belong to this class. People will perhaps say, 'This is a very cold view of another life'. But when we come to analyse our pleasures in this life, when we once get beyond the low physical pleasure of food and sleep, and those gratifications of the bodily appetite which Nature has very wisely made pleasant to us because bodily life must be maintained, and would otherwise be neglected—when we get beyond those low but necessary physical enjoyments, is not most of our happiness in *ideas*? Beautiful pictures, beautiful music, and so forth leave us a residuum of ideas which is the immortal part of them. Or again. Some one may have given us a dainty piece of Dresden china, or a handsome and valuable ring. Suppose the china is smashed, or the ring lost or stolen—do we not feel that it is still ours? Not only can we see it in our mind's eye (and that after all is what we mostly did when we still possessed it, for such treasures are too frequently kept under lock and key, and but rarely see the light), but the affection of the giver is an inalienable thing.

> You may break, you may ruin the vase, if you will,
> But the scent of the roses will cling to it still,

sang Thomas Moore; and whether this be literally true or not, the fragrance of affection clings even to the memory of a vanished gift. We can never *really* lose anything that is a token of love, unless, alas! we lose the friendship or love itself; and when *that* takes place, we feel ready to fling the gifts away! When

the idea is gone, what is the good of the outward and visible sign? At any rate we cannot carry the outward symbols of affection beyond the grave; but Death cannot destroy the Love which they symbolized.

And it is not till we come to think of our human affections that we realize what has been already said, from another point of view. Much as we love our dearest friends we feel that they have two sides, the actual and the ideal. Ideally our friends are perfect; actually, they only hint at, and suggest, future perfection. Suppose your friend has died, and you know that in this world he is lost to you for ever. Immediately an image of him, or her, rises before you, more beautiful than life; it is to you what the phantasm of the absent Helen was to Menelaus. At very few moments of actual life did he or she reach that absolute perfection which this image of the memory possesses. Suppose, for instance, that your friend is unexpectedly restored to you, by recovery from a 'fatal' illness, by escape from shipwreck or imprisonment. When the old familiar life recommences, do you not once more become conscious of all those little rubs and annoyances which had affected your intercourse in former days? Perhaps even when Helen came back to Sparta, Menelaus may have felt—despite her divine origin—that she had her little imperfections. The 'real' always interferes—more or less—with the 'ideal'. Or perhaps it would be more true to say that the 'actual', the 'phenomenal' interfered with the true, inward reality. There are very few times in life when the character of any man or woman is seen in its full and complete realization. A great portrait-painter has, of course, the intuition which enables him to convey to

the spectator something of this abiding and permanent character in his subjects. But, taking this from an everyday point of view, we all must own that it is very difficult for us to idealize the people with whom we have daily and familiar intercourse. 'The corruptible body presseth down the soul.' Now and then it comes to the friend of our everyday life to be

> happy as a lover, and attired
> With sudden brightness, like a man inspired.

But these moments are like the blossoming of the lilac or the crocus, as rare as they are wonderful. Yet the lilac blossom or the crocus flower are the real, the ultimate expression of the life of the plant—that which makes all the rest worth while: when we think of the lilac, we think of its white and purple clusters; when we think of the crocus, we think of its sunlit golden radiance. And so, when we think of our friends, do we not love to recall the immortal, unchangeable part of them, that which transcends all the mere passing accidents of their being, that which is indeed their very best and inmost selves? Having once gained this conception, can we ever lose it? And yet we must guard against the thought that our friends are *only* beautiful ideas. Even in this life they haunt our memory—but are they to be nothing more than memories? Here it is, I think, that the thought of Personality comes in. A man is not a man, only in the sense in which a crocus is a crocus. Every man, every woman, has the gift of personality, of independent will, and consequently of moral responsibility. This leads naturally to the thought of personal, individual immortality, and hence of (at least probable) mutual

recognition. And when we see, as most of us have done with our nearest and dearest, a character gradually taking shape, as a statue under the sculptor's hand, to fuller and fuller perfection, we can hardly suppose, when that ideal perfection has been reached, that the sculptor will wantonly destroy such an exquisite piece of work—a piece of work which often does not attain completeness till the body has almost been broken up and destroyed (like the chips that fly from the marble), and the exquisite conception is released at last from every obstacle to its development, and confronts us in all the beauty which has from eternity existed in the Designer's mind.

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